ART AND ARTISTS IN PERTH 1950-2000

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Art History
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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an account of the development of the visual arts in Perth from 1950 to 2000 by examining in detail the state of the local art scene at five key points in time, namely 1953, 1962, 1975, 1987 and 1997. The significant events that occurred in these years had long-term effects on the direction art followed in Perth. At each stage, the examination of the art scene is structured according to the analytical framework French theorist Pierre Bourdieu proposed for the study of cultural production. Bourdieu’s central concept of the artistic field as a site where works of art are produced and consumed by social agents with a set of interrelated functions has been used to identify and research the elements of the local art scene most relevant for the critical interpretation of the events observed. The first two chapters focus on the internal organisation and the relations among the agents of the emerging artistic field that led to the consolidation of modernism as the dominant form of cultural production in Perth in the 1960s. Subsequent chapters study the effects on the artistic field of increasingly complex interactions with the fields of political and economic power that marked the transition towards postmodernist forms of cultural production and consumption from the 1970s onwards.

The historical narrative presented in this thesis considers Aboriginal art produced in Perth, which is an aspect of the local art scene not included in previous art historical narratives. Aboriginal art is examined within the same analytical framework deployed for the study of the art of settler Western Australians. The research, in this area, builds on the ideas of New Zealand art historian Damian Skinner who proposes this type of methodological approach to Indigenous art in order to better understand cultural production in settler-colonial societies such as Australia. Thus the study of both settler and Aboriginal art has been based on a similar procedure that involved looking closely at specific works of art, trying to understand the local conditions surrounding their making and reception, and endeavouring to place the developments identified in the relevant international and national contexts.
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAB    Aboriginal Arts Board
AGWA   Art Gallery of Western Australia
ECU    Edith Cowan University
ICA    Institute of Contemporary Arts (London)
LWAG   Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery
PSA    Perth Society of Artists
PICA   Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts
UWA    University of Western Australia
WAAG   Western Australian Art Gallery
WAIT   Western Australian Institute of Technology
n.d.   Not dated
n.p.   Not paginated

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INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this thesis is to provide an account of the development of the visual arts in Perth from 1950 to 2000. Since no such history has ever been published, this thesis fills this void and in the process establishes a scholarly basis for the dissemination of knowledge regarding an important period of the local history. Writing history is above all constructing a narrative. In this introduction I set out the methodological approach that structures my narrative and outline the six chapters in which I have divided it.

1. Methodological approach

1.1 History as montage

The span of fifty years covered in this investigation has been researched by concentrating on five key years: 1953, 1962, 1975, 1987 and 1997. The goal of this focused research is not to present a detailed report of everything that happened in each of the selected years, but to identify points of entry for the discussion of relevant interpretative problems, while at the same time limiting as much as possible the contours of those problems. Thus my narrative slides backward or forward in time from the starting key year in those instances when it is necessary to expand the chronological scope of arguments or to trace effects and influences. The key years were selected on the basis of preliminary research that indicated that clusters of significant events occurred in and around the years selected. I explain below the criteria applied to determine what counts as significant events in the context of the aims of this thesis.

I have opted for this approach with the intention of developing a critical art-historical narrative that foregrounds its constructed nature. This type of narrative opposes the traditional art historical survey where events are arranged in an orderly progression that seems to flow naturally from one key achiever to the next, thus creating the illusion that there is only one possible interpretation of historical events. I draw here on the ideas of art historian Ernest Gombrich and of philosopher Walter Benjamin. Gombrich once compared historical time to a bottomless well.¹ For him, the historian’s only hope to make sense of that infinity is to stop and concentrate in illuminating one spot at a time to ask questions, that is, to apply the tools of historical enquiry and analysis.² In the

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² Ibid., 4.
present case, each of the five stops along the fifty-year journey allows for the building of a detailed picture of the Perth art scene at particular times. What to include in the picture is clearly a decision made in the present. In this respect, it is pertinent to recall Benjamin’s influential “Theses on the Philosophy of History.”3 History, according to Benjamin, “is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.”4 It is the historian, in the present, who selects facts from the past to fill historical time. In Benjamin’s conception, facts become historical “posthumously,” as it were.5 According to the philosopher, “A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary.”6

If the logic of the traditional historical survey is chronological succession, the approach I am applying follows the logic of juxtaposition, of montage. Literary scholar Richard Sieburth argues that one of Benjamin’s most far-reaching conclusions is that “history is not a cumulative, additive narrative in which the uninterrupted syntagm of time flows homogenously from past to future, but rather a montage where any moment may enter into sudden adjacency with another.”7 The historian’s task then is not to describe the past ‘as it really was,’ even if that was possible, but to assemble a coherent montage that illuminates the past by addressing the critical concerns of the present. As Benjamin put it “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”8 Of course, it has always been the case with all historical narratives that they are constructed from a particular point of view in the present. One of the principles that structure this dissertation is the recognition that the years and events selected for study are relevant for the understanding of today’s art scene and its theoretical concerns.

The detailed descriptions of the five years examined in this thesis aim to critically reanimate certain aspects of the past following, to an extent, the example of Benjamin’s monumental historical work The Arcades Project.9 Sieburth, in his analysis of The Arcades Project, traces the epistemological basis of Benjamin’s historical method to Marcel Proust.10 In Proust’s oeuvre we find a proliferation of detail that produces a richly textured recreation, or reanimation, of the past.11 Yet, Proust never allows his readers to forget that his insightful descriptions of the past depend on the contingent

4 Benjamin, Illuminations, 263.
5 Ibid., 265.
6 Ibid.
8 Benjamin, Illuminations, 257.
nature of his memory in the present. Following the procedure of juxtaposing detailed descriptions of particular moments in time allows me to identify threads of continuity - not necessarily in a linear fashion - while recognising and addressing significant discontinuities. The identification of meaningful connections between events observed at different points in time is central to my arguments in this thesis. However, I am not claiming that the connections I discuss are the only ones to be found; rather that they are the most relevant for my critical concerns. For as art historian and theorist Terry Smith has claimed, the connectivity between objects, ideas, people and institutions “is the core subject of the art historian’s attention.”

1.2 The Art Scene as Artistic Field

The ‘Perth art scene’ is the term that I use most frequently to refer to the works of art, people, institutions and discourses which constitute the object of my study in this thesis. Since there is no comprehensive account of its history for the period investigated, the task of researching it involved identifying mostly primary sources and collecting data through archival research and interviews. A considered methodological approach was required in order to select, organise and make sense of the disparate array of data collected. On this point, Benjamin’s example is again a useful remainder of the risks posed by large amounts of detailed and unconnected data. For all its brilliant philosophical insights, his monumental historical collage, *The Arcades Project*, was left as an unfinished work. To resolve my data, I draw on the methodological framework that French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu developed for the specific purpose of studying the production and consumption of cultural goods. Bourdieu’s framework came out of his empirical research in the fields of art and education. It is particularly useful in cases like the present one, when it is necessary to classify and organise qualitative data arising from cultural phenomena. Moreover, the theoretical underpinnings of Bourdieu’s methodology are congruent with the conception of history that has guided my research. A brief outline of Bourdieu’s approach to the study of art follows, considering only those areas of his work that have informed the construction of the methodology deployed in this thesis.

From a philosophical perspective, Bourdieu’s work can be seen as a sustained critique of Kantian aesthetics and a deconstruction of the concept of taste that stemmed from it. In his third critique, *The Critique of Judgement*, Immanuel Kant argued that a judgement can only be considered as aesthetic when it is disinterested, that is, free from any desires, needs or interest in the actual

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existence of the objects apprehended which might distort pure contemplation. The aesthetic position that follows from this proposition dominated thinking on art until the middle of the last century. In a way, Bourdieu’s study of the production and consumption of art is a refutation of Kantian aesthetics. His most influential work, Distinction, makes this clear in its subtitle: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. In this book, Bourdieu observes that the required disinterest posited by Kant as a necessary condition of the judgement of taste is only available to a certain class of individuals who have a privileged education and the cultural capital to enable them to achieve pure contemplation. Thus for Bourdieu the experience of art is not universally defined. On the contrary, it is always historically situated and acquires its characteristics from the social conditions prevailing at a particular place and time.

Admittedly, Bourdieu developed his methodology for the study of social relations and not art history, which he regarded as an incomplete analysis of the work of art. Yet in my examination of what I call the Perth art scene, I have found very useful one of the central concepts of his methodology, the concept of ‘artistic field.’ Hence I have adopted, and adapted, one of his core methodological tools but not his aims since a sociological analysis is not part of my art historical interpretation. I summarise below the major features of the notion of artistic field, firstly to locate it within Bourdieu’s model for the analysis of the production and consumption of cultural goods and secondly to explain how I use it in the organisation of my research data.

For Bourdieu the artistic field is an intellectual construct that assists him in thinking about art and literature in a relational mode. He sees it as the system of objective relations between the positions held by the agents who participate in the production of art. It is also “the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated.” The agents may be individuals such as artists, critics, curators and collectors or they can be organisations such as museums, art galleries, the educational system,

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13 Michael Grenfell and Cheryl Hardy, Art Rules: Pierre Bourdieu and the Visual Arts (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), 39. To understand the implications of Kant’s arguments on the nature of the aesthetic judgment, one needs to see the third critique as part of the author’s whole philosophical project which consisted in examining the validity of all knowledge acquired through human reason. In his two first critiques, Pure Reason and Practical Reason, Kant had addressed rational thinking in the realms of truth and ethics, but these still left unexamined the affective responses to the world. Thus in the third critique Kant sought to elucidate non-cognitive judgments which determine cognitive experiences such as pleasure and pain.


15 Ibid., 4-5.

16 Ibid., 493.


18 Ibid., 78.

19 Ibid.
academic journals and magazines. The agents in this model do not act in a vacuum. Bourdieu places the production of cultural goods, of which works of art are a special case, within the field of power that along with cultural power includes economic and political power. Furthermore, the field of power is one of the components of the total field of class relations. Thus when Bourdieu analysed an artistic field, he was able to trace the changes observed in it not only to the relations among its agents but also to their interactions with the rest of the fields of power and class relations. Examples of these interactions are changes in government policies or in economic conditions.

A crucial feature of the artistic field is that for Bourdieu the cultural goods that circulate in it are symbolic goods. This means that they have two integral parts. On the one hand, works of art have a material manifestation - for instance an object, installation or performance - and on the other they have symbolic meanings. In Bourdieu’s framework, both the recognition of a work as art and its value depend on the symbolic meanings attached to it by interpretative discourses. He explains:

> The irreducibility of the work of symbolic production to the act of material fabrication performed by the artist has undoubtedly never been as visible as it is today. Artistic work in its new definition makes artists more than ever tributaries to the whole accompaniment of commentaries and commentators who contribute directly to the production of the work of art by their reflection on an art which often itself contains a reflection on art.

It follows then that artists are not the only creators of the work of art. Their task is completed by the critics, curators, academics and, in some instances, collectors who comment on art. It is at this point that the notion of artistic field and Arthur Danto’s ‘artworld’ share some common ground. However, there are important differences due, arguably, to the perspectives of the two intellectuals. Danto sought to establish the definition of art and proposed that in order to recognise something as art, one required “an atmosphere of artistic theory, knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.” Moreover, he asserted that artistic theories make “the artworld and art possible.” Similarly, from Bourdieu’s sociological perspective, it is the discourses of certain social agents that legitimise particular cultural goods as works of art. But this is where the similarities end. For Danto the artworld is made of artistic theories and knowledge whereas for Bourdieu the artistic field is made of relations between social agents participating in the production of art. My use of the term ‘art scene’

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20 Ibid., 37-38.
21 Ibid., 113.
23 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 77-78.
25 Ibid., 581.
is much more closely related to Bourdieu’s artistic field than to Danto’s artworld. In the rest of the thesis, I sometimes use ‘Perth art scene’ and ‘Perth artistic field’ interchangeably but keeping in mind that Bourdieu formulated his concept of ‘artistic field’ as an analytical tool with no geographic specificity.

According to the range of the public for whom cultural goods are produced, Bourdieu distinguishes between fields of restricted production and fields of large-scale cultural production. He considers the artistic field as a field of restricted production because its goods are destined mainly for a public of cultural producers. Bourdieu concluded that fields of restricted production, freed from the demands of a large undifferentiated public, tend towards autonomy, in the sense that they develop their own criteria for the evaluation of their products. He observed that over time the degree of autonomy achieved by the artistic field was marked by the disjunction between its own principles of evaluation and those of the general public. In other words, the discourses on art, on which the meanings and value of the works depend, become so specialised that only agents active in the artistic field have the cultural means to appropriate them. Thinking about the validity of these conclusions, it is pertinent to remember that Bourdieu conducted his research in the second half of the last century covering mostly French art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His conclusions seem to describe well the trajectory of the visual arts in Europe and North America during the period he studied. I would argue that they are also applicable to the development of the visual arts in Perth, as will be seen in the rest of this thesis.

I have used Bourdieu’s methodological framework to organise the data I collected about the Perth art scene along the lines of an artistic field. Consequently, I have classified the information in two main types: information on the elements of the art scene and information on external factors affecting it, such as economic conditions and government policies. I count among the elements of the art scene works of art, artists, critics, collectors, art galleries, art publications, art schools and the public. This organising principle has helped me to identify the key years that serve as punctual markers in my narrative. As stated in the opening paragraph of this section on methodological approach, clusters of significant events occurred in those years. In the context of this investigation, significant events can be seen as actions by any of the agents of the art scene that lead to observable changes in the conditions of production or consumption of art which require, or at least might benefit from, art historical interpretation. Examples of these events are exhibitions that

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26 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 115.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 116.
introduce new participants to the art scene, exhibitions which consecrate certain styles of art or the opening of art galleries and art schools.

Before proceeding to the last subsection on methodology, I must clarify the role of the images that accompany the text of this thesis. As indicated in the previous paragraph, I count works of art as elements of the Perth art scene, but they are very distinctive elements for they are the primary focus of my investigation. Works of art are also central to Bourdieu’s methodological framework, which after all was devised precisely to study their production and consumption. The reproductions that I include in each chapter are very much part of the logic of montage that informs my re-creations of the past. They develop, as it were, a parallel and complementary argument. Images are called upon to bring to the fore a sense of the art-historical past, to convey visually a narrative of change.

1.3 Aboriginal Art in the Perth Art Scene

A salient feature of the Perth art scene is the presence of Aboriginal artists. Although the route most commonly taken when writing about Aboriginal art has been to discuss it separately from the art of the Australian settlers, in this thesis I examine them together, within the same analytical framework. It is my contention that this course of action contributes to a better understanding of both types of art. In the present case, the relational nature of the notion of artistic field that I have adapted for my investigation has allowed me to consider Aboriginal artists as a unique group of participants in the Perth art scene. There is, however, one drawback in this respect. Examining how the actions of individuals or groups have an effect on the art scene requires detailed data, such as history of exhibitions and reviews. This is a constraint for the study of local Aboriginal art. For most of the period covered in this investigation, Aboriginal artists living in Perth worked at the margins of society; consequently detailed data on their careers is scarce. Nevertheless, even if it is difficult to follow in detail the individual careers of Aboriginal artists, it is still possible to trace the changes in the status of locally made Aboriginal art by paying attention to social and art discourses, mainly from the perspective of postcolonial studies.

Among the variety of postcolonial discourses that have appeared since the 1970s, the approach of archaeologist and historian Nicholas Thomas has been of assistance in this case. Thomas has studied cross cultural interactions in settler countries such as Australia and New Zealand and is interested in elucidating how art produced by the descendants of the European settlers and by the indigenous

29 A typical example is the series World of Art, published by Thames and Hudson in the 1990s where the art of the Australian settlers appears in Christopher Allen’s Art in Australia while the art of Aboriginal Australians is treated in Wally Caruana’s Aboriginal Art.
population addresses the problematic situation in which they coexist. Following this line of enquiry, New Zealand art historian, Damian Skinner proposes the practice of what he calls “settler-colonial art history,” as the means of studying both settler and indigenous art within the same analytical framework. This is the path I have followed. I do not have separate chapters dedicated to local Aboriginal art and there is no difference in my methodology, only a difference in emphasis on the type of discourse considered. As explained above, discourses are central to the study of an artistic field, but while postcolonial discourses are not essential in my examination of art made by the descendants of the European settlers they are fundamental when dealing with particular issues raised by Aboriginal art in relation to the art of the white majority. Apart from this, I proceed in a similar manner: looking closely at the works studied; trying to understand the local conditions surrounding their making and reception as well as endeavouring to place the developments identified in the relevant international and national contexts. What I mean by relevant international and national contexts is explained in the next section, where I describe the sources I have consulted to delineate them.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International and National Contexts

The publications discussed in this section fall into two main categories. The first includes those publications which assist in building the context for an examination of the art made in Perth between 1950 and 2000. These are books and essays on the history of art in Australia and overseas. The publications in the second category deal with the subject of this thesis, art made in Perth or in Western Australia. In the first group, I have considered publications that focus mostly on art produced in Europe and North America that from the vantage point of the twenty-first century can be characterised as ‘mainstream international art.’ Among the numerous publications treating the art of the last century, Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism (Art since 1900) has been the most useful for the purposes of outlining the relevant international context for the developments observed in the Perth art scene.

The four writers of Art since 1900 not only discuss precisely the type of international art which I see as the most relevant for my investigation, but they do it in a way that foregrounds the critical

discourses that have framed the art they are presenting.\textsuperscript{33} This is a crucial feature of \textit{Art since 1900} for it allows me to compare the theoretical background of specific art practices with the conditions prevailing in Perth when similar or related practices appeared here. In this respect, their analysis of the emergence of conceptual art in Europe and in the United States is particularly helpful when examining the changes observed in the Perth art scene in 1975 (Chapter Three). Similarly, their illuminating discussion of the differences between conservative and progressive postmodernist practices is part of the theoretical background that supports my arguments in relation to the art seen in Perth in the 1980s (Chapter Four).

There are certainly a number of omissions and limitations in \textit{Art since 1900} but the authors make explicit their critical position with respect to the art they have included and by implication with respect to what they have excluded. At the centre of their narrative is the complex dialogue between ‘the avant-gardes’ from before and after World War II and all along their essays, they refer to ‘advanced’ art and artists from Europe and North America, as the subject of their study.\textsuperscript{34} Only a few examples of artworks made outside these areas, mostly from Asia and Latin America, are mentioned and the authors locate them at the margins of the world they explore. For instance, they mention Brazil as “a peripheral outpost” where new art was created out of reinterpretations of canonical trends of Western Modernism.\textsuperscript{35} Hence in their world view, pace Terry Smith, Australia, although it remains unmentioned, can be considered as another peripheral outpost.

It is not surprising then that many types of art from the last century did not qualify as ‘advanced’ for the authors of \textit{Art since 1900}. For the purposes of my investigation, one of the most important omissions is British art produced before the emergence of Pop art. Except for sculpture, British art made before 1956 is rarely mentioned in this book, which can be attributed to its low international standing before the late 1950s. However for artists working in Perth in the 1950s and 1960s, British art was very influential as will be seen in the first two chapters of this thesis. Consequently, in order to contextualise my discussion of the 1950s and 1960s, I have referred to publications dedicated exclusively to British art of the relevant period such as \textit{New Art New World: British Art In Postwar Society}, \textit{Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties and The Sixties Art Scene in London}.\textsuperscript{36} The marginal position of British art in the international scene is examined in these sources and although

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 12.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 13.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 376.
\end{itemize}
a discussion of the topic is not within the scope of the thesis, it, nevertheless, must be considered as part of the background that informed the development of the visual arts in Perth.

Regarding Australian art, I have used as a main reference Bernard Smith’s *Australian Painting 1788-2000*.37 Despite the book’s limitations, Ian Burn’s 1988 assessment of its second edition still rings true: “[it] has remained the standard text for students of Australian art.”38 As source of information on Australian art, the most evident limitation of *Australian Painting 1788-2000* is stated in its title; it is a history of painting. Yet, this text can be seen as fairly representative of Australian art as a whole up to 1970 given that before the 1970s painting was the dominant art form in Australia. Apart from the success of Bertram MacKennis or Max Dupain and Mildura Sculpture triennials, very little else was exhibited as art in the country. Another characteristic of the book, a limitation and an advantage at the same time, is the way the author’s critical stance with respect to international art coloured his evaluation of Australian art. On the positive side, Bernard Smith’s intellectual breadth has left a well-documented, scholarly account of Australian painting which is an invaluable source of information on the art he studied and, perhaps more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, it is also a clear statement of his critical thinking that was to dominate writing on Australian art for many years.39 On the negative side, Smith’s critical framework, which consisted mainly in tracing stylistic influences as a way of analysing works of art, led to a rather narrow interpretation of the history of Australian painting as an imitative practice, depending for its development on international models. One must remember, though, that when Smith was writing the first two versions of *Australian Painting*, published in 1962 and 1971, the predominant way of writing art history was precisely as an account of stylistic influences. This scholarly method was about to be challenged and changed for ever, but in 1970 it was supported by a long tradition going back to the early twentieth century.40 Thus when in the 1980s writers such as Ian Burn questioned the validity of Smith’s conclusions; they were questioning primarily a way of thinking about art and in particular about art’s place in the world.

To supplement Bernard Smith’s point of view, I have relied on the critical writings of Ian Burn and Terry Smith. Burn argued that in Smith’s narrative the history of Australian painting is presented as a series of adaptations or re-workings of international styles. In this construction, there were two types of Australian painters, the modernists and the reactionaries. Modernist Australian artists

39 Ibid.
40 Stylistic analysis was at the centre of Heinrich Wölfflin’s seminal *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, originally published in 1915 and an important precedent for formalist art historians and critics of the 1950s and 1960s.
appeared to lack initiative in taking up the advanced ideas from overseas and consequently were always behind the international avant-gardes, while those artists who did not follow international trends and continued to paint regional imagery were characterised as conservatives or reactionaries.\footnote{Burn, \textit{The Necessity of Australian Art}, 63-66.} According to Burn, the widespread acceptance of this interpretation gradually led to the displacement and devaluation of regionalist art in Australia.\footnote{Ibid., 63.} In his books \textit{Dialogue: Writings in Art History} and \textit{National Life & Landscapes}, Burn proposed a reassessment of the landscape genre from a regionalist perspective, which is particularly relevant for my examination of art made in Perth in the 1950s and 1960s, both by Aboriginal and settler artists (Chapters 1 and 2).\footnote{Ian Burn, \textit{Dialogue: Writings in Art History} (North Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1991); Ian Burn, \textit{National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting, 1900-1940} (Sydney: Bay Books, 1990).} Terry Smith has published widely on Australian and international art but in this thesis I have focused on his writings on the centre/periphery relationship, what he calls the provincialism problem, and on Australian modernism, the modernism problem.\footnote{Terry Smith, “The Provincialism Problem,” \textit{Artforum} 13, no. 1 (1974); “Between Regionality and Regionalism: Middle Ground or Limboland?” \textit{Periphery} nos. 40-41 (Spring 1999- Summer 2000); \textit{The Twentieth Century - Modernism and Aboriginality}, vol. 2 of \textit{Transformations in Australian Art} (Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002).} Several implications of Terry Smith’s arguments inform my discussion of modernism in Perth in the 1960s (Chapter Two) and of the debates on local identity of the 1980s (Chapter Four).

The predominance of painting in the Australian art scene is reflected in the few publications dedicated to the history of other art forms, for example sculpture. In Perth, sculpture emerged in the late twentieth century as one of the most significant art forms practiced locally. To place the beginnings of Perth’s contemporary sculptural practice (Chapters 2 and 3) in a national context, I refer mainly to two texts, \textit{The Development of Australian Sculpture 1788 - 1975} by Graeme Sturgeon and Anne Sanders’ doctoral dissertation “The Mildura Triennials 1961 - 1978: An Interpretative History.”\footnote{Graeme Sturgeon, \textit{The Development of Australian Sculpture}, 1788-1975 (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978); Anne E Sanders, “The Mildura Triennials 1961-1978: An Interpretative History” (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2009).} The literature review in Sanders’ dissertation confirms the paucity of publications dedicated to the history of Australian sculpture. Besides Sturgeon’s book, she mentions only two more books on the subject: \textit{Sculpture} by Lenton Parr and \textit{Australian Sculptors} by Ken Scarlett.\footnote{Lenton Parr, \textit{Sculpture} (Melbourne: Longmans, 1961); Ken Scarlett, \textit{Australian Sculptors} (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1980).}
2.2 The History of Art in Perth

Up to the present, the publications treating the history of art in Perth or in Western Australia have not focused on the period examined in this thesis. There are several previous publications on the subject but dedicated mostly to pre-1950 events, among them: *Western Australian Art and Artists 1900 - 1950* (*WA Art and Artists*), *A Survey of Western Australian Art from 1696*, *Essays on Art and Architecture in Western Australia* and *Aspects of Perth Modernism, 1929 - 1942*. WA Art and Artists is the catalogue of an exhibition, organised by the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1987. It included mostly paintings made in Perth and took the history of this art form up to the point where this thesis begins. The curator of the exhibition, Janda Gooding, adopted a broad historical perspective to place the development of local art in its cultural context, an unusual procedure at the time for which the sole published precedent was the 1986 catalogue *Aspects of Perth Modernism, 1929-1942*, edited by David Bromfield. In a way, my investigation continues the history presented in *WA Art and Artists*, there are however differences in terms of scope and context that are worth noting.

First of all this thesis focuses on work made by Perth-based artists, work produced in the rest of Western Australia is brought into the discussion only when it can be identified as a relevant precedent. By contrast, WA Art and Artists attempted to survey art made across the State, even though in addition to Perth artists, it included only a few painters based in Bunbury and Albany. From a twenty-first century point of view, perhaps the most glaring omissions in this publication are Aboriginal art and artists, who had certainly been working in what is today Western Australia for millennia. Yet, what seem to be omissions can be considered as the reflection of the commonly accepted view of art in Perth in the 1980s. Fine art then referred mostly to paintings made by settler artists. However, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, this view was being challenged precisely at the time when this catalogue appeared and within the institution that published it, the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). In terms of scope then, compared to WA Art and Artists my investigation has a narrower geographical focus but includes the work of Aboriginal artists based in Perth. It also includes a wider range of media, besides painting and drawing. Indeed, the progressive

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diversification of local art practice, regarding medium and subject matter, is one of the themes that run along the thesis.

In terms of context, *WA Art and Artists* told the history of local art decade by decade against the backdrop of the economic and cultural conditions prevailing in Western Australia. In this thesis, the context for the study of art made in Perth includes the interactions with two larger artistic fields, the Australian art scene and the international art scene. Gooding might have justified her choice of context by her own conclusion that during the period she studied the visual arts in Western Australia were characterised by “insularity and provincialism.” However, an expanded context is necessary for the interpretation of local art made during the period I have studied, especially after 1970, when interest in national and international trends becomes clearly an important driver of the changes observed in the Perth art scene.

The other publication with a wide historical perspective, *A Survey of Western Australian Art from 1696* is primarily a picture book showing paintings from the colonial period and the early twentieth century. It was published by Arthur Spartalis, a collector of early colonial painting who is also the owner of a dealer gallery specialising in this type of art. Only the final and rather brief chapter in his survey - fifteen pages - bears any relation to the subject of this thesis, as it illustrates the work of a few painters working in Perth from 1945 to 2008. Apart from these books, the essay “Visual Sites: Art” attempts to review the role of art in the creation of a Western Australian identity since settlement up to the late 1980s. Understandably, the thirty-two pages of this essay do not allow for a comprehensive exploration of the art made in Western Australia over nearly 160 years.

In the absence of a publication dedicated exclusively to art in Perth or in Western Australia, a possible source to follow the development of the visual arts in this region could have been the several histories of Australian art published since the 1960s. Regrettably, there are very few references to art produced in Western Australia in national surveys. In the most comprehensive of these surveys, *Australian Painting 1788-2000*, only fourteen Perth painters are mentioned with no more than a few sentences dedicated to each of them. The level of analysis is certainly not deep. For instance, in less than one page Smith deals with the work of Robert Juniper, George Haynes and Guy Grey-Smith, characterising their paintings as examples of “older modes of painting” which have

48 Gooding, *Western Australian Art*, 80.
subsisted in smaller centres.\textsuperscript{51} This kind of remark supports Ian Burn’s argument that painting based on the landscape is cast as an outmoded relic in Bernard Smith’s art historical narrative.

In other histories of Australian art even less space is given to Western Australian artists. Robert Hughes considered worthy of mentioning only the work of Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper in \textit{The Art of Australia}.\textsuperscript{52} Andrew Sayers stated, in \textit{Australian Art}, that his intention was to “create a new shape for the history of Australian art.”\textsuperscript{53} Just one artist from Perth appears in this newly-shaped history, Howard Taylor and even then nothing of his “sublime abstract work” is illustrated.\textsuperscript{54} Christopher Allen in his Introduction to \textit{Art in Australia} writes “I have not attempted to discuss the many lesser though often very able artists in the smaller centres.”\textsuperscript{55} According to his criteria, all Western Australian artists fall in the category of “lesser artists” except for Brian Blanchflower who deserves a few lines, although not an illustration. One of the most recent additions to the list of national surveys is the catalogue of the exhibition \textit{Australia}, staged in London in 2013. For the contributors to this hefty volume, Brian Blanchflower and Howard Taylor are the sole artists from Perth whose work merited inclusion in an exhibition representing Australian art.\textsuperscript{56}

To try to understand these omissions, it is pertinent to go back to Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of the work of art as a symbolic good. According to Bourdieu, the recognition and value of works of art depend on the meanings they acquire through the discourses circulating about them in an artistic field. In the case of Perth, the size of the art scene up until the 1970s was such that except for articles in the local journal \textit{The Critic} and newspaper notices not much else was written on locally made art. Specialised art discourse did not appear until the 1980s when art criticism by academics became common in local and national publications, although not for a long period as will be seen in Chapter Five. Consequently, critical discourse on art made in Perth is rare. It is not a coincidence that there are a number of publications documenting the work of the painters most often mentioned in national surveys, Howard Taylor, Miriam Stannage and Brian Blanchflower.

Yet, if there is no account of the history of art in Perth since 1950, there is material to put one together. Some of this material is found in publications, but for the most part it has survived in the form of newspaper articles and archival documents such as letters and minutes of meetings. For the

\textsuperscript{51} Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 413. Smith writes about two more Western Australian artists in \textit{Australian Painting}, John Perceval and Trevor Vickers, but he refers to them as Melbourne artists.


\textsuperscript{53} Andrew Sayers, \textit{Australian Art} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 220.

\textsuperscript{55} Christopher Allen, \textit{Art in Australia: From Colonization to Postmodernism} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 15.

\textsuperscript{56} Thomas Keneally et al., \textit{Australia} (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2013), 23, 24, 233, 254 and 255.
purposes of this review, I have divided the published material in three groups: books and essays about specific aspects of the Perth art scene, monographs tracing the careers of particular artists and history publications.

2.2.1 Aspects of Art in Perth: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Noongar Art

The first collections of essays treating the history of art in Western Australia were prepared by art historian David Bromfield, who was appointed founding head of the Centre for Fine Arts of the University of Western Australia in 1983. *Aspects of Perth Modernism, 1929-1942* is the catalogue of one of the earliest exhibitions organised by the Centre for Fine Arts, shown in Perth and Sydney in 1986. Although the events examined in this book fall outside the time limits of my investigation, they are relevant precedents for the reception of late modernism in Perth in the 1950s and 1960s.

Published in 1988, *Essays on Art and Architecture in Western Australia* is one of the first books dedicated to the visual arts in Western Australia, as opposed to books focusing on painting exclusively. It contains essays by seven authors on a wide range of subjects such as sculpture, architecture, the representation of Aborigines in settler visual culture, easel painting and mural painting. In *Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties*, Bromfield documented the range of local work that met his criteria to be considered as “first rate art.”

Particularly interesting is the author’s account of the emergence of Media Space, the first group of Perth-based artists committed to experimental media. This publication and its critical stance are central to my examination of the Perth art scene in 1987 (Chapter Four). *Gone West* is a compilation of essays published by Bromfield as an art critic, mostly during the 1980s. Its main significance, for the aims of my thesis, is the way the author attempts to define Australian settler art as a regional practice in relation to international art. A regional practice, that Bromfield very much advocates should be assessed on its own terms and according to its own history and not by applying European criteria. He wrote: “Australian experience, not European aesthetics, is the primary determinant of all that is specific and different about Australian art”.

The arguments in *Gone West* resonate with Ian Burn’s critique of Bernard Smith’s interpretation of Australian painting as dependent on international models and can be seen as part of the contemporaneous debates on the validity of the accepted historical narrative of Australian art. Even though most of the essays in *Gone West* addressed the situation of Australian settler art as a whole,

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58 Ibid., 19-20 and 53-55.
Bromfield adopted a local point of view when referring to Perth artists, which makes his arguments on regionalism highly significant for the interpretation of local art and unique among the art criticism published at the time.

A more recent publication on local painting that I have found particularly useful is In Abstract: Form and Essence in Recent Western Australian Painting, the catalogue of an exhibition dedicated to abstract painting as practiced in Perth during the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the introductory essay, curator John Barrett-Lennard locates this practice in the context of critical discourses on international abstraction. In a way, Barrett-Lennard demonstrates that, contrary to Bromfield’s claims, Western Australian experience and international artistic concerns are not mutually exclusive. He shows that the appreciation of local painting is enhanced by examining it within a critical framework informed by global aesthetic discourse. Significantly, when Barrett-Lennard addresses the problematic reception of abstraction in Australia, he points to poorly developed art criticism.

Sculpture is an aspect of the Perth art scene which has received scarce attention from local art writers. Although the number of sculptors working in Perth increased markedly from the 1970s onwards, publications on the subject only began to appear in the 1990s. David Bromfield is one of the few authors who have published in this area. The essays in his exhibition catalogue Small is Beautiful give a good idea of the range of sculptural practice in Perth in the 1990s. Additionally, Bromfield has published monographs on sculptors Tony Jones, Akio Makigawa and Stuart Elliott. The catalogues of two more exhibitions of the 1990s, Backward Glance: A Survey of Western Australian Sculpture from the mid-1960s to the 1990s and One Hundred Years: Western Australian Sculpture 1895 - 1995, document the history of local sculpture and are the basis for my discussion of it. Another art form rarely treated by local writers is architecture, despite its crucial role in

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60 Janice Baker and John Barrett-Lennard, In Abstract: Form and Essence in Recent Western Australian Painting (Crawley, W.A.: Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, 2002).
61 Ibid., 8.
changing the outlook of Perth since the 1960s (Chapter Two). My arguments in this respect rely largely on Geoffrey London’s research found in A Short History of Perth Architecture.  

As explained in the section on methodology, I consider local Aboriginal art as an integral part of the Perth art scene. In this thesis, I refer mostly to Noongar art made in the tradition of the Carrolup Native Settlement, which is the kind of Aboriginal art with the longest history of exhibition in Perth and arguably one of the most influential on contemporary, local Aboriginal artists. The Noongar people are the original inhabitants of the region where Perth is located. Paintings made by Noongar children, forcibly separated from their families and interned at Carrolup, have been shown here since the 1940s. Their history was documented in the 1952 book Child Artists of the Australian Bush. Regrettably, forty years passed before another publication appeared on this subject. Anthropologist John Stanton published Nyungar Landscapes: Aboriginal Artists of the South-West: The Heritage of Carrolup, as an accompanying catalogue to the exhibition of the same name, shown at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in 1992. It toured nationally, contributing to an awakening of interest in contemporary Noongar art that led eventually to the exhibition South West Central: Indigenous Art from South Western Australia 1833-2002 at AGWA in 2003. The catalogue of this exhibition together with the catalogue of Koorah Coolingah = Children Long Ago and Stanton’s writing have been my main sources of information on Noongar art and artists. Even though the publication Indigenous Art: Art Gallery of Western Australia is not dedicated exclusively to local Aboriginal art, its information has been nevertheless useful to place AGWA’s holdings of Noongar art in a historical context.

Useful as these books are as sources of information, they have two main limitations from an art historical perspective. First, they contain almost no information on the exhibition and reception of Noongar art in Perth after 1952. They describe the beginnings of the Carrolup style of painting in the 1940s and its international success in the early 1950s to then leap to contemporary artists and their debt to the original child artists. The second drawback, in terms of the goals of my investigation, is

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67 John E Stanton, Nyungar Landscapes: Aboriginal Artists of the South West: The Heritage of Carrolup, Western Australia (Crawley, W.A.: University of Western Australia, Berndt Museum of Anthropology, 1992). There are several spelling variants of the name Noongar, for consistency I follow the spelling used in the sources published by UWA Publishing.
70 Brenda L. Croft and Art Gallery of Western Australia, Indigenous Art: Art Gallery of Western Australia (Perth, W.A.: Art Gallery of Western Australia, c.2001).
the absence of a theoretical framework to interpret or assess the significance of the works presented in these publications. In this respect, I have drawn on the theoretical approach underpinning Ian Burn’s discussion of the changing appreciation of Albert Namatjira’s works to examine the critical reception of Noongar art. The watercolours by Namatjira are not only formally similar to the early Noongar paintings but his career is also sufficiently close in time to the emergence of the Carrolup style to make it possible to assume similar cultural conditions behind the reception and appreciation of the work of both the Arrernte painter and the Noongar children. Moreover, Burn’s position is essentially postcolonial and compatible with the approach proposed by Nicholas Thomas and Damian Skinner on which I have based my discussion of Aboriginal art as a whole.

2.2.2 Monographs on Artists

Exhibition catalogues are by far the most numerous publications in this category, a demonstration of the instrumental role of public art galleries in documenting the history of local art. Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor, Robert Juniper and Brian Blanchflower are the Perth artists whose careers have been best documented with several monographs published about their work. The pioneering publication in this area is the catalogue of the exhibition *Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective*, held at the Western Australian Art Gallery in 1976. Lou Klepac curated the retrospective and put together a catalogue with a level of detail comparable to a *catalogue raisonné*, a remarkable improvement with respect to the meagre publications of the Western Australian Art Gallery before 1976. In addition to what today is considered standard information such as date, medium and dimensions, Klepac documented the location and history of exhibitions for each painting shown in the retrospective. Considering that Grey-Smith had been exhibiting for twenty-seven years in Perth, where he was a leading artist, and that nothing substantial had been written about his career in all those years, the information in this catalogue, including a biographical essay, was an important contribution to the history of local art. I would go as far as to identify this catalogue as the first publication treating the history of art in Perth.

Three more publications dedicated to the work of Guy Grey-Smith have appeared between 1996 and 2014. Among them, the most relevant for my research has been *Guy Grey-Smith: Life Force*,

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published by curator Andrew Gaynor in 2012. In this book, the only one on Grey-Smith which is not a catalogue, Gaynor provides detailed accounts of the life of the painter, his ideas and working methods. Although the information about the paintings illustrated in Guy Grey-Smith: Life Force is not as complete as that in Klepac’s catalogue, the book is nevertheless an important source of information about the Perth art scene between the late 1940s, when Grey-Smith returned from the United Kingdom, and 1981 when he died.

Regarding diversity of publications, the case of Robert Juniper is unique among Perth-based artists with four books and a doctoral thesis documenting his career. Only one of these books is an exhibition catalogue, the other three were put out by commercial publishing houses while no commercial publications have been devoted to the work of other recognised local artists. The number and the range of publication about Robert Juniper, going all the way from picture book to rigorous academic dissertation, might be seen as an indication of the shifting appreciation of his paintings as fine or decorative art. At one end of the range, Gavin Fry’s Robert Juniper offers mainly high-quality reproductions in a coffee-table book format whereas at the other end, the catalogue of the exhibition Robert Juniper and the dissertation by Christine Sharkey adopt a critical approach to present material which is more relevant for the purposes of this thesis. Particularly informative is Janda Gooding’s essay on the Perth art scene of the 1950s as context for the reception of Juniper’s early work. Equally illuminating are Christine Sharkey’s discussions of the artistic training of Robert Juniper in Britain in the 1940s and of his participation in the loose association of modernist artists known as the Perth Group in the 1950s and 1960s.

Three scholarly monographs have documented the work of painter and sculptor Howard Taylor, two of them are catalogues that accompanied exhibitions at AGWA. The exhibition Howard Taylor: Sculptures, Paintings, Drawings 1942-1984 took place in 1985 and established the reputation of the


artist.⁷⁷ At this time, he was known mostly by his public commissions as sculptor, but the rest of his oeuvre had not received much recognition despite more than thirty five years of local exhibitions. The curator of this retrospective, Gary Dufour, examined Taylor’s working methods and in the process outlined the relations between his drawings, paintings and sculptures as stages in the artist’s visual exploration and interpretation of his natural environment. Consequently, discussion of sculptural practice is an important part of the catalogue essay, making this one of the first publications that documents locally-made sculpture. This catalogue also set a precedent for the extent of its critical context and for its focused visual analyses of specific works.

Howard Taylor: Forest Figure, written by Ted Snell, is a biography of Howard Taylor that includes a catalogue raisonné of the artist’s work up to 1994. Given the scant documentation that accompanied many exhibitions staged in Perth before the 1980s, the information in the catalogue raisonné has been useful when identifying works included in early exhibitions.⁷⁸ Howard Taylor Phenomena, published in 2003 to complement the exhibition of the same name, builds on the catalogue of the 1985 retrospective. It presents a panoramic view of Taylor’s whole career and a definitive list of all the exhibitions in which he participated.⁷⁹ In his introductory essay, curator Gary Dufour addresses the last two decades of the artist’s life and places his achievements in the context of twentieth-century painting.⁸⁰

The catalogue of the first Howard Taylor retrospective appeared in the mid-1980s, during what can be characterised as the peak period of art historical writing in Perth. After Klepac’s well-researched catalogue of 1976, there was a pause until 1984 when David Bromfield curated Elise Blumann, Paintings and Drawings 1918-1984.⁸¹ In the exhibition catalogue Bromfield outlined the career of the German-born artist who arrived in Perth in 1938, having trained at the Berlin Academy of Art between 1917 and 1919. In the last section of his essay, Bromfield concentrated on Blumann’s advocacy of modernist art and credited her with helping to start a new dialogue on this subject in the Perth of the 1940s, thus preparing the terrain for the developments seen in the 1950s.⁸² As mentioned in the previous subsection, in 1986 Bromfield published the informative catalogue Aspects of Perth Modernism. It was followed in 1987, by Janda Gooding’s WA Art and Artists and Bromfield’s Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties. In the same year, the list of

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⁷⁸ Ted Snell, Howard Taylor: Forest Figure (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995).
⁸⁰ Ibid., 13-31.
⁸¹ David Bromfield, Elise Blumann Paintings & Drawings 1918-1984 (Perth, W.A.: Centre for Fine Arts, University of Western Australia, 1984).
⁸² Ibid., 18-19.
monographs on Perth artists increased with the publication of the catalogue *The Work of Brian McKay* by Helen Topliss.83 The busy 1980s closed with two more monographs on well-known local artists Brian Blanchflower and Miriam Stannage, both published in 1989.84

Curated by David Bromfield, the exhibition *Brian Blanchflower* was held at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1989. It was in effect a retrospective documenting Blanchflower’s oeuvre from his beginnings in Britain and the exhibition catalogue included a *catalogue raisonné*. However, the most distinctive feature of this exhibition catalogue is the examination of Blanchflower’s installations and outdoor performances of the 1970s.85 Although performance art and installations were first seen in Perth in 1975 and 1976 at the then new Praxis Gallery, there is no documentation of those events, except for brief newspaper notices. Hence the importance of Bromfield’s descriptions, photographs and critical appraisal of the work of Brian Blanchflower in this area. Three more recent catalogues have updated the information on Blanchflower’s career *Glimpses: Paintings from the 1980s; Brian Blanchflower, from the Generative Eye: Paintings 1990 - 2001 and Space-Matter-Colour: Brian Blanchflower: Paintings from Four Decades*.86 The essays in this last catalogue, by John Barrett-Lennard and Ian McLean, are especially relevant for the aims of my investigation for they locate the evolution of Blanchflower’s painting within discourses on postmodernism and representation, a theoretical approach which is rare in writings about Western Australian art.

The only substantial publication on the work of Miriam Stannage is the catalogue of the exhibition *Miriam Stannage: Perception 1969-1989* seen at AGWA and at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne in 1989. Stannage is possibly the Perth artist with the most diversified art practice; over the years she has worked in painting, photography, collage and video art. She started as a painter, but was one of the first local artists who turned away from painting to explore other media. The catalogue of the 1989 survey exhibition examined Stannage’s diversified body of work in the context of conceptual art and traced the change in this direction to the artist’s residence in Paris in 1971.87

Philosopher Patrick Hutchings had already written about Stannage’s paintings and collages as

conceptual art as early as 1975. Apart from the discussion of works exhibited by Stannage in that year, what makes Hutching’s essay especially relevant for my study is the philosopher’s articulation of a local view on conceptual art.

### 2.2.3 History Books and Essays

In this last subsection of the Literature Review, I group a number of books and essays which although not dealing with specific works of art or artists are, nonetheless, sources of information on the social and cultural conditions that influenced the development of the visual arts in Perth in the second half of the last century. Prominent among these sources are the histories of institutions involved in the teaching, exhibition and collection of art. Fittingly, the history of the oldest school of art in Perth is the best documented. In *Art and Design in Western Australia: Perth Technical College 1900-2000*, Dorothy Erickson put together a series of essays telling the history of the Art Department of the Perth Technical College since its foundation in 1900. Arguably, the vocational training offered by this Art Department was one of the factors determining the direction of the visual arts up to the 1960s, for until then it was the only local institution offering training for a career in art. It split into two separate organisations in 1967. One became today’s Technical and Further Education College (TAFE), the other was initially called the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) and is currently known as Curtin University. WAIT established its own School of Art where degrees in Fine Arts were eventually offered. After 1967, *Art and Design in Western Australia* follows the history of art teaching at the TAFE only. This publication also documents the important role of the Technical College as provider of employment and meeting point for the many artists who have worked there as teachers.

Histories of art galleries provide information regarding the circumstances that led to their establishment and about the goals they have pursued through their exhibitions and collections. In the realm of public galleries, only the university art galleries have published their histories. Primarily the history of the University collection, *A Partial View: The University of Western Australia Art Collection* also details the history of the two galleries where the collection has been displayed. In his introduction, then director of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery John Barrett-Lennard explains the

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90 John Barrett-Lennard and Alan Watson, eds., *A Partial View: The University of Western Australia Art Collection* (Crawley, W.A.: The University of Western Australia, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, 2009); Vashti Innes-Brown, Christopher Malcolm and Pauline Williams, eds., *John Curtin Gallery 98-08* (Bentley, W.A.: John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University of Technology, 2009).
collection’s contribution to the cultural life of the community. In particular, he discusses the circumstances that led to the formation of the contemporary art collection in the 1950s, when at the same time it reflected changing views on art and promoted those changes by making available to the local public examples of recent Australian art.  

The histories of two of the earliest commercial galleries in Perth, the Skinner Galleries and the Triangle Gallery, have been extremely informative. In her essay “Rose Skinner, Modern Art, and the Skinner Galleries,” Christine Sharkey documented every stage of the story of the first commercial gallery to open in this city. Sharkey took the unusual step of describing even the planning process that led to the design of the gallery. The level of detail of her account has supported my discussion of the Perth art scene as an artistic field. Almost every organisation, artist, critic, academic or collector who played a part in the reception of late modernism in Perth in the 1960s has a place in this history. Understandably, Rose Skinner, the owner of the gallery, is the focus of the narrative but the author clearly outlines Skinner’s promotional activities and her commercial relationships with leading members of the local art scene.

The publication The Foulkes Taylor Years: An Invitation Exhibition accompanied a 1982 exhibition held at WAIT. It examined the role of designer David Foulkes Taylor in awakening interest in modernist art and design among the Perth public in the 1950s and 1960s. The book centres on the design business started by Foulkes Taylor in 1957, part of it became eventually the Triangle Gallery. This was the second commercial gallery in Perth, when it opened officially in 1963. Despite occupying a very small space, its effect was significant for it can be considered as the alternative venue for emerging artists of the time, where the public went to see the most adventurous local art in a congenial atmosphere, surrounded by the contemporary designer pieces sold by Foulkes Taylor.

Situation Vacant: Documenting the History of Artist Associations Post-1960 and Providing a Context for the Discussion of the Role of Artists’ Collectives and Art Practise in the Inner City is one of the few publications that appeared in the 1990s treating the history of the local art scene. It is essentially the history of artist collectives who run exhibition spaces in Perth from 1960 to 1996 and was

91 Barrett-Lennard and Watson, A Partial View, 9-10.
94 Gaynor, Guy Grey-Smith, 77.
95 Duffy, The Foulkes Taylor Years, 11-13, 33.
compiled by the some of the artists who participated in the management of those independent spaces. Although the authors do not take a critical stance regarding either the causes behind the formation of artist collectives or the work they produced, their publication is nevertheless a valuable source of factual information that certainly helps to build the context announced in the title. It includes for instance date of formation of each collective, membership lists, location of their exhibition space, and brief description of their main activities. Situation Vacant is particularly important for the study of artist groups formed in the 1970s and 1980s for there are not many sources of information about them.

The review of the literature treating art made in Perth from 1950 to 2000 demonstrates that the existing publications on the subject are not dedicated completely to the period investigated or they examine only the work of specific artists. Many of the existing publications are catalogues of exhibitions, which do not attempt an assessment of the art shown; their main purpose is to provide factual information. Yet, a few of the publications included in this review adopt a critical point of view to discuss and assess local work in relation to contemporaneous art practice. This is notably the case of the various catalogues and essays written by Bromfield; the catalogues of the Howard Taylor retrospectives of 1985 and 2003 by Dufour; the catalogue of In Abstract by Baker and Barrett-Lennard and the catalogue of the 2010 Brian Blanchflower retrospective by Barrett-Lennard and Ian McLean. These are highly focused publications, each engaging with limited aspects of the topic covered in this thesis and except for Bromfield’s early essay collections, all concentrate on art theory or criticism, leaving aside broader cultural or social issues. Indeed, this select group of publications tend to confirm my characterisation of the Perth art scene as a growing artistic field moving in the direction of autonomy, for their focus on specialised art discourses is evidence of a large degree of independence from considerations such as economic value or the judgement of the general public. In any case, the critical voices found in this handful of publications have been useful sources that inform my historical narrative and their arguments are addressed in the chapters dealing with their specific subjects.

3. Thesis Structure and Chapter Summary

Having established where this thesis sits in relation to the existing literature, I now outline its structure. The thesis is organised in six chapters bounded by this introduction and a series of appendices. The first five chapters are dedicated to a detailed study of the Perth art scene in each of the following years: 1953, 1962, 1975, 1987 and 1997 while the last chapter presents the
conclusions of this investigation. Adapting Pierre Bourdieu’s methodological framework, the Perth art scene is examined in each of the chapters as an artistic field constituted by the following elements: artworks created or exhibited in each of the selected year, important exhibitions, artists who exhibited locally, artist organisations, exhibition venues, art criticism and educational institutions involved in the teaching of art. Among the significant external factors interacting with elements of the artistic field, I refer to economic conditions, population growth, and government policies on both art education and promotion of the arts.

In order to articulate a historical narrative of art in Perth, I have adopted two distinct regional approaches. In the first half of the thesis, namely chapters 1 to 3 covering the period 1950 to 1975, I am deploying a concept of regionalism similar to that espoused by Ian Burn. Regionalism in this case refers to an artistic tradition concerned mainly with imagery that expresses strong attachment to place. As pointed out by Burn, this conception of regionalism differs from Bernard Smith’s characterisation of regional Australian art as a conservative or residual practice that somehow survived in distant places such as Western Australia.

Rather than approaching local art as a retrograde form of Australian art, I see it as fashioned by the conditions of the artistic field that existed in Perth between 1950 and 1975. One of the most important notions in the theory of the artistic field is autonomy, meaning the capacity of the members of the artistic field to define their own criteria for the evaluation of works of art. I suggest that from 1950 to the 1970s, the autonomy of the Perth art scene increased gradually. It had almost no autonomy in 1950, when the criteria to determine the importance and value of works of art depended mostly on the judgment of the general public, a public not familiar with specialised art discourses. For instance, Janda Gooding, writing in 1987, pointed to the “continuance of the romantic landscape tradition in Western Australia” up to 1950 as a sign of conservatism. Such an assertion accords well with Bernard Smith’s version of the history of Australian painting. However, the predominance of landscapes can also be interpreted in terms of the expectations they fulfilled for consumers of art in a developing artistic field, which had not achieved autonomy. The expectations of a general public are explained by Bourdieu based on the conclusions he drew from his empirical research on the relationship between cultural competence and aesthetic judgments. Bourdieu observed that individuals lacking the competences acquired through familiarity with art and its theory apply to works of art the schemes they apply to perceptions of everyday existence.

97 Burn, The Necessity of Australian Art, 5.
98 Bernard Smith, Australian Painting, 413.
100 Gooding, Western Australian Art, 80.
systematically reducing the things of art to the things of life.\textsuperscript{101} They expect every work to perform a function, if only that of a representation, which they often judge in terms of enjoyment or in terms of morality.\textsuperscript{102} Recognisable regional imagery can certainly perform a number of practical functions as will be seen in Chapter One.

In the case of Perth, as the size and complexity of the artistic field increased it moved in the direction of autonomy; the direction predicted by Bourdieu’s model. It gradually established criteria similar to those applied for the assessment of art not only in the rest of Australia, but more significantly outside Australia in cities commonly described as ‘artistic centres of the world.’ It is at this point that I change my regionalist approach and in Chapters Four and Five, devoted to art made in 1987 and 1997, am writing about Perth as a distinctive, albeit peripheral, region of the world. My analysis in this part of the thesis draws on Terry Smith’s binary formulation of the centre/periphery relationship, but it is less concerned with a critique of cultural domination than with an examination of interactions and homologies with an external and larger artistic field. This shift reflects and responds to the debates on the value of locality that were central to the Perth art scene of the 1980s and that seem to have been resolved in the 1990s in favour of an orientation towards a broader global perspective. I must note, however, that this tension between a focus on the local and the opening to international trends and ideas is present all along the period studied in this thesis. It might well be that the responses of each generation of artists to this perceived conflict have done much to drive the expansion of the Perth art scene.

\textbf{Chapter One: A Moment of Flux, 1953}

The first chapter starts at the point the catalogue to \textit{Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950} ended. Curator Janda Gooding closed her catalogue essay by concluding that during the first half of the twentieth century, visual art in Western Australian had been characterised by conservatism and insularity in response to the demands of the society that produced it.\textsuperscript{103} It is debatable, however, that Western Australian society as a whole was still characterised by conservatism and insularity in the middle of the post-war prosperity of the early 1950s. Chapter One examines the Perth art scene in 1953 focusing on events which demonstrate that there was interest, at least among certain groups, in opening to the new ideas and art evolving in the rest of Australia and the world. These events can also be seen as evidence of the beginnings of the formation of an autonomous artistic

\textsuperscript{101} Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction}, 44.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{103} Gooding, \textit{Western Australian Art}, 80.
field. Thus I treat 1953 as part of a transition period between an art scene in which the value of art was assessed in terms of the expectations and opinions of a general public and an art scene that was on its way to establish its own criteria to evaluate works of art. Crucially, some of the individuals interested in bringing new ideas and practices to the local art scene occupied positions invested with the degree of cultural authority necessary to promote change in that direction. They included members of the staff of AGWA and the University of Western Australia, who were instrumental in organising the main events studied in this chapter: five significant art exhibitions, the first Festival of Perth and the first acquisitions for the contemporary art collection of the University of Western Australia.

Chapter One also examines changes in attitudes and expectations that contributed to shape an art scene more receptive of new art and ideas. Many of those changes came about as a consequence of the dislocations caused by World War II. Two clearly identifiable groups were to have a long-term effect in the development of the local art scene, European émigrés who came to Perth fleeing the war and local artists who came back after the war. Both groups brought with them first-hand experience of modernist art, albeit of two different kinds. Among the émigrés were artists and professionals who took an active part in the cultural life of the city; some were to become prominent art patrons and taste makers. Individuals in this group started to arrive in the 1930s and were familiar with early modernism, by which I mean modernism as it developed in Europe in the first two decades of the last century. A case in point is painter Elise Blumann, who was exposed to German Expressionism while studying in Berlin between 1917 and 1919. Regarding artists who returned to Western Australia, the chapter follows the early careers of painters Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor and Robert Juniper. They attended art courses in Britain either during or after the war and were consequently introduced to the British version of European modernism. These two versions of modernism converged in Perth in the 1950s.

The history of Aboriginal art in Perth runs along the thesis in a parallel way until 1997. It was only in the 1990s that the work of Perth-based Aboriginal artists started to be exhibited in art galleries alongside the work of settler artists. This chapter introduces the history of Carrolup Native Settlement in the context of the colonial policies that disposed the Noongar people who are the original inhabitants of the region where Perth is located. Carrolup, a rural settlement some 300 km south-east of Perth, is the origin of a distinctive Noongar style of painting whose evolution is followed along the thesis. There are records of only one exhibition by Noongar artists in 1953. The scant information about it is examined in relation to the much-better documented reception of the
art of the Aboriginal painters of the nearly contemporaneous Hermannsburg School from Central Australia.

A fundamental part of this chapter is the description of the rather basic arts infrastructure that existed in 1953. In light of the centrality of the idea of a growing artistic field as interpretative principle in this thesis, each chapter maps the available art infrastructure such as exhibition venues, art schools and art publications. This is done with the double intention of recreating a sense of the conditions of the art scene in each year studied and to keep track of changes in its size and complexity.

Chapter Two: Building a Modern City, 1962

The increase of interest in catching up with new art and ideas observed in the Perth scene of 1953 continued throughout the decade amid sustained economic prosperity. By the 1960s, the dynamism of the city and its aspirations to project an image of modernity to the world were evident in the preparations for the British Empire and Commonwealth Games which Perth hosted in 1962. The subject of this chapter is the expression of those aspirations in architecture, painting and sculpture. The abundance of economic resources in the 1960s made possible to articulate, in concrete and glass, the aspirations of part of the Perth population to live in a modern metropolis. The first generation of professionally trained architects and the buildings they designed in the 1960s is one of the essential parts of this chapter. Hand in hand with the building boom, sculpture flourished for the first time in Perth, producing works that complemented the modernist outlook of the new buildings. A comparison of the development of local painting and sculpture starts in this chapter. While the emerging modernist painters had to compete with and replace local predecessors working in a representational style favoured by a large proportion of the public, emerging sculptors did not have predecessors in Perth. Moreover, from the beginning they were commissioned by architects conversant with recent artistic trends to create sculptures that did not look as part of an old tradition.

The recognition of the local version of late-modernist painting as the most significant art produced in Perth in the 1960s depended, to a large extent, on the arts infrastructure developed between 1953 and 1962, namely art criticism and commercial art galleries. This chapter traces the emergence of these two key elements of the Perth art scene. The new kind of criticism that appeared in the journals The Critic and Westerly, written mostly by academics working in the English Department of the University of Western Australia, legitimised local modernist art as a subject of academic study.
while at the same time placing it in the context of specialised discourses not easily grasped by the
general public. The first two commercial galleries to open their doors in Perth were operating in
1962. Art dealers play the fundamental roles of promoters of artists and guarantors of the quality of
their work. In the present case, the owners of both businesses proved to be not only able and
enthusiastic promoters of new local art but they also contributed to educate a generation of
consumers of art by bringing examples of contemporary art and design from the rest of Australia and
overseas.

The section on exhibitions outlines the experimental phase that led to the local version of
modernism and then focuses on the reception of examples exhibited by the best-known painters of
the time Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper. Their paintings are emblematic of the Perth variant of
late modernism characterised by the adoption of forms of gestural, as opposed to geometric,
abstraction to create stylised images of the natural environment. By examining the reception of the
exhibitions of 1962, the chapter also highlights the growing gap between the aesthetic judgements
of the general public, who valued representational landscapes, and the judgments of the restricted
public of cultural producers who championed modernist ones.

The last section of this chapter mentions the exhibitions by Noongar artists residing in Perth.
Unfortunately, few records of their work have survived for many of them resided in Fremantle
Prison at the time. Among these artists, only the career of painter Revel Cooper has been
documented to any meaningful extent. His landscape paintings of the early 1960s are discussed in
the context of the disjunction between the modernist art consumed by a minority of the Perth public
and the preference of the large majority for recognisable landscapes.

Chapter Three: The End of Art as They Knew It, 1975

The year 1975 marked an important break in the history of art in Perth as the predominance of
modernism began to wane while emerging artists engage in the exploration of novel approaches to
artmaking brought about by the critical scrutiny of the modernist paradigm. Chapter Three considers
the changes that created the conditions for this significant break. While the first two chapters
concentrate on the internal working and development of the artistic field, in this chapter I examine,
initially, changes in the political sphere that favoured the expansion and diversification of both the
Australian and the Perth art scenes of the 1970s. I focus particularly on Government policies in two

104 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 76-77.
key cultural areas, the restructuring of the higher education system and the promotion of diversity in the arts.

Part of the reform of the education system consisted in transferring art training to technical institutes, or colleges of advanced education, which were provided with the autonomy and the resources needed to form artists in an academic atmosphere that enforced professional standards recognised by peers. In Perth, the effects of the new training arrangements were most evident in sculpture. The recruitment of young British sculptors, familiar with current avant-garde practices, as teachers by the then newly established WAIT set the foundations for the development of local sculpture as an experimental practice that would eventually expand beyond the register of the object. I introduce at this point Bourdieu’s concept of habitus with the aim of elucidating the links between formal training and professional practice.

Regarding the promotion of the arts, a reformist left-of-centre Commonwealth Government advanced an agenda of inclusivity, diversity and innovation by channelling resources to the funding of crucial structures such as non-commercial spaces for experimental art and the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB). The latter was the outcome of a policy of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs embraced for the first time by an Australian Government. The AAB’s promotional strategies ensured the continued international success of Aboriginal art from remote centres, especially those located in the Western Desert, but they did not extend to urban centres, such as Perth, in a significant way until the 1980s. Nevertheless, AAB funding benefited indirectly Perth-based Noongar artists. In the section on Aboriginal art, I consider the landscapes exhibited by one of these artists, Revel Cooper, and their potential reading, from a postcolonial perspective, as an affirmation of Noongar identity.

The establishment of new types of exhibition venues also contributed to weaken the dominance of modernism. The early 1970s saw the appearance in Perth of commercial galleries dealing exclusively in contemporary art of an innovative nature while the first artist-run experimental space, Praxis, was founded in 1975. The section on exhibitions contrasts the art shown by the most recognised painters of the time at the prestigious Skinner Galleries with the conceptual work and the experimental techniques of the emerging artists who showed at the new exhibition spaces.

Chapter Four: In the State of Excitement, 1987

Chapter Four explores the range of art practices observed in the postmodern Perth scene at its peak in 1987. Whereas Chapter Three outlines the effects on the artistic field of measures taken in the political sphere in the 1970s, this chapter considers the role of economic forces in creating the
conditions for the booming of the visual arts in the 1980s. The title of Chapter Four refers to the excitement created by the vast amounts of financial resources that circulated in Western Australia at this time. Famously, the State Government tried to capture the buoyant mood by stamping vehicle licence plates with the line: ‘W.A. State of Excitement.’ Nowhere was the excitement of the 1980s more visible than in the growth of corporate collections. The section on collections studies primarily the Robert Holmes à Court Art Collection, which has been the most significant private collection for local artists. Like so many other aspects of the Perth art scene, this collection reached its maximum expansion in the late 1980s.

My survey of the local art scene builds on Fredric Jameson’s view of the postmodern as a force field in which residual and emergent forms of cultural production coexist. Most of the chapter focuses on emergent postmodernist practices, but forms of modernist art have persisted, especially in painting, up to the present century. Emergent postmodernist practices were seen mostly in alternative spaces while the residual forms of modernism were shown in commercial art galleries. This chapter also examines the ambition to document the history of local art, apparent in some of the exhibitions of 1987, which attempted to locate settler Western Australian art within a regionalist discourse framed by the centre/periphery debates of the 1970s and 1980s. It is worth nothing, though, that for all their intentions to put together the history of art in Western Australia, none of these exhibitions included examples of art made by Western Australians of Aboriginal descent.

The section on Aboriginal art outlines the disparities in the fortunes of Western Desert art and the local variant of Aboriginal art, but a change was starting to become visible in 1987. The early career of Noongar artist Shane Pickett is an example of the transition occurring then. Pickett started to exhibit in 1976 at the same venues associated with welfare organisations where his predecessor Rebel Cooper had exhibited before, but by 1987 he was exhibiting in a commercial gallery. I discuss the increased recognition of Aboriginal art in the 1980s in the context of the debates sparked by the planning of the contested celebration of the Australian Bicentennial in 1988.

Chapter Five: In a State of Diminished Excitement, 1997

If locality was the topic that dominated the Perth art scene of 1987, the subject at the centre of this chapter is the shift, observed a decade later, towards an increasingly broader context for local art. I explore this phenomenon in light of the economic and cultural forces that promoted globalisation in the 1990s. The exhibitions organised at AGWA and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts are discussed as evidence of the tendency to present Perth-made art in an international context and the
exhibitions at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery as a continuation of the 1980s efforts to document the history of local art, but this time against the background of the development of Australian art.

The section surveying the Perth art scene focuses mainly on postmodernist practices that by 1997 predominated over other forms of artistic production, particularly in the leading commercial galleries and in alternative spaces. Chapter Five explores the revival of geometric abstraction and of minimalism as characteristic of the postmodern practices seen in Perth, and in many other places, in the 1990s. While neo-minimalism became a widespread style among established and emerging artists alike, I concentrate on its deployment with a critical purpose by the younger generation of artists. The discussion of Aboriginal art starts in this section and not in a separate section. By this stage the work of Perth-based Aboriginal artists had been finally accepted as part of the artistic field and consequently was shown in the public and commercial galleries surveyed in this section. I examine two types of Aboriginal art exhibited in 1997, landscapes painted within the conventions of the Carrolup tradition and politically-oriented art.

The section on collectors focuses chiefly on the Kerry Stokes Collection which became the most significant private art collection in Perth in the 1990s. Under the stewardship of curator John Stringer, the Kerry Stokes Collection acquired significant examples of contemporary international art. I discuss the exhibition Material Perfection: Minimal Art and Its Aftermath: Selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection as an example of an effective way to place locally-made art in a global context.
CHAPTER ONE: A Moment of Flux, 1953

The 1987 exhibition *Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950 (WA Art and Artists)* surveyed visual art in Western Australia and located it in a broad cultural context. The predominance of naturalistic landscapes during the period surveyed was interpreted by its curator, Janda Gooding, as a sign of insularity and provincialism, traits she attributed to conservative attitudes in Western Australian society. The main concern of Chapter One is to demonstrate that by 1953, the Perth art scene showed clear signs of a growing interest in the new ideas and art evolving then in Australia and Europe. To develop this argument, I describe the local art scene as an emerging artistic field in terms of Pierre Bourdieu’s framework for the study of cultural production. Bourdieu’s analytical framework, thus, provides a method to identify the interactive agents driving the changes observed in the local artistic field.

While describing the Perth scene in 1953, Chapter One highlights changes in attitudes with respect to those outlined in *WA Art and Artists*. At the core of the chapter is an examination of the art exhibitions that can be seen as the most significant either because they brought new art to Perth or because they made evident the changes occurring in local art practice. Whereas much of the chapter sets out the history of settler Western Australian art, the final section introduces the contemporary history of Aboriginal art made in Perth, a vital aspect of the artistic field not included in *WA Art and Artists* or in other art-historical narratives.

1. Perth in the Early 1950s

In the post-war years, Perth’s population grew rapidly amidst the good economic conditions that extended through the 1950s. This is how historian Jenny Gregory describes Perth on the eve of Queen Elizabeth’s visit in early 1954:

> In 1954 Perth was the smallest capital city in the Australian mainland. With a population of not quite 349,000, it lagged well behind Sydney with 1.8 million, Melbourne with 1.5 million, Brisbane with over 502,000 and Adelaide with nearly 483,000. However, the metropolitan area was growing dramatically. Its population had increased by 31 per cent between 1933

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106 Ibid., 80.
and 1947 and by 22 per cent between 1947 and 1954 to make it the fastest growing metropolitan area in Australia.\textsuperscript{108}

Not only was the population growing rapidly, the economy was recovering from the war restrictions at a fast pace too.\textsuperscript{109} The positive economic conditions, the arrival of European artists and intellectuals, and a growing professional class provided fertile ground for the formation of new cultural institutions.\textsuperscript{110} According to Gregory:

> The postwar years were a crucial period in the development of cultural activities in Perth, with the establishment of the WA Opera Society in 1947, the WA Orchestra in 1950, the WA Ballet in 1953, and the Perth Festival in 1953.\textsuperscript{111}

The organisation of the first Perth Festival suggests that if insularity had been a trait of local society in the first half of the century, by 1953 certain groups at least, particularly at the University of Western Australia, were alert to a new range of possibilities opened by cultural events staged

\textsuperscript{110} Gregory argues that large numbers of Europeans fleeing the war helped to transform Perth’s cultural outlook in the 1940s and the early 1950s. Among them, she names individuals such as Dr Salek Minc, painters Elise Blumann, Louis Kahan, and Harald Vike. Besides these well-known personalities, large groups of educated migrants, mainly from Czechoslovakia and Hungary [page 63], arrived in Perth. Gregory, \textit{City of Light}, 63 and 66.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 67.
overseas such as the Festival of Britain.\textsuperscript{112} Held with great popular success in London and in centres across the United Kingdom between May and September 1951, the Festival of Britain was a celebration of the survival and recovery from the effects of the war.\textsuperscript{113} Since it was forward looking, the promotion of advances in science, culture and the arts together with an emphasis on education were central themes of the Festival.\textsuperscript{114} Less than two years later, in January 1953, the Adult Education Board of the University of Western Australia presented the first Festival of Perth.\textsuperscript{115} More modest in scale than its British antecedent, the Festival of Perth shared the goal of promoting the arts and education. The rapid response to new ideas in the Perth of the 1950s is underscored by the seven-year gap before the next art festival appeared in Australia, the Adelaide Festival in 1960, and then only on a biennial basis rather than the annual event staged continuously in Perth.

2. The Status Quo: The Perth Art Scene in 1953

The Festival of Perth was an important cultural event in 1953 but it was by no means the only one. In the auspicious economic circumstances mentioned above, an active art scene operated in the city. Thirty-three exhibitions took place in 1953, despite the limited art infrastructure which included just four exhibition venues: the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), Newspaper House Art Gallery, the Adult Education Rooms and Boans Fashion Gallery.\textsuperscript{116} In Bourdieu’s relational model of the artistic field, public and commercial galleries are among the most influential agents participating in the creation and consumption of art. Public art galleries, in particular, are considered agents of diffusion of the system of beliefs that generates the value of the symbolic goods recognised as works of art.\textsuperscript{117} These agents are instrumental in the growth of the artistic field when their authoritative interpretation of the art they exhibit contributes to educate consumers of art. Arguably, the degree of influence exerted by public galleries depends on the quality of their exhibition programs and the timely dissemination of information. However AGWA, the only public art gallery in Perth at this stage, organised so few events that painter Elise Blumann reportedly called it a “morgue.”\textsuperscript{118}

Appendix 1 shows that AGWA hosted just four exhibitions in 1953.

\textsuperscript{112} The Festival of Perth was renamed as the Perth International Arts Festival in 2000.
\textsuperscript{113} Garlake, \textit{New Art New World}, 73; Harrison, \textit{Transition}, 36.
\textsuperscript{114} Garlake, \textit{New Art New World}, 73-75.
\textsuperscript{115} Fred Alexander, \textit{Campus at Crawley: A Narrative and Critical Appreciation of the First Fifty Years of the University of Western Australia} (Melbourne: Cheshire for the University of Western Australia Press, 1963), 690.
\textsuperscript{116} The official name of the State Gallery has changed over the years. In each chapter, I use the name recorded in the official documents of the time. In this case, it was called Art Gallery of Western Australia in the Annual Report of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, dated 30 June 1953.
\textsuperscript{117} Bourdieu, \textit{The Field of Cultural Production}, 122.
\textsuperscript{118} Gaynor, \textit{Guy Grey-Smith}, 40.
The other three exhibition spaces functioning at the time were privately run, although not as commercial galleries. Newspaper House Art Gallery, the largest and most active of these venues, opened in 1933 and was located on the top floor of the West Australian Newspapers building on St George’s Terrace. Twenty exhibitions were held at Newspaper House Art Gallery during 1953. Such level of activity is explained in part by the closing of the Claude Hotchin Galleries in 1951, which left Newspaper House as the only venue with sufficient capacity for large shows. The Adult Education Rooms was a space adjacent to the public lending library established by the Adult Education Board of the University of Western Australia in Howard Street in the city centre. It was rented for art exhibitions and variously called hall, lecture room, rooms or gallery, which is a sign of its uncertain status. One more site available for exhibitions was located at Boans, the largest department store in the State. There seems to have been a separation between spaces where it was acceptable for artists to exhibit, where they expected to be recognised as serious artists producing fine art, and spaces such as the gallery at Boans. Despite the extremely crowded schedule at Newspaper House few artists seemed inclined to organise their exhibitions at the department store. In 1953, the Boans Fashion Gallery, or Fashion Lounge as it was sometimes called, held exhibitions by two amateur painters and by groups such as the Orchid Society of Western Australia.

The three spaces described above were basically rooms for hire, where artists were in charge of their exhibitions, displaying their work in a manner of their choosing. On the one hand, if these arrangements gave them complete control over the presentation of their creations, on the other it deprived them of the endorsement and the promotional advantages of commercial galleries, which are essential components of Bourdieu’s model of the artistic field. In his model, commercial galleries act as guarantors of the quality of the work they exhibit. In a way, cultural businesspeople consecrate products they have “discovered” which would, otherwise, remain mostly unknown. They do this by association, by investing their symbolic capital and linking it to elevate the reputation of the artists they represent. Symbolic capital refers here to a degree of “accumulated prestige,


120 Alexander, *Campus at Crawley*, 668-669.


122 Authors Christine Sharkey and Philippa O’Brien have described in detail the arrangements made by Robert Juniper for his 1953 exhibition at the Adult Education Rooms. Christine Sharkey, “An Investigation into the Conditions of Practice,” 113; O’Brien, *Robert Juniper*, 20. The rental of Newspaper House Art Gallery was most likely managed by staff of *The West Australian* newspaper. Sharkey, ibid., 115.

123 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 76. Bourdieu’s translators refer to commercial galleries indistinctly as galleries, art dealers and art traders. They reserve the term ‘museum’ for public art galleries.
celebrity, consecration or honour” and it is founded on knowledge and public recognition.\textsuperscript{124} The lack of commercial galleries and the limited activity of the only public gallery in the city were among the most important factors hindering the development of the local art scene in 1953. It is important to note, however, that regarding commercial galleries the situation was not very different in the rest of the country. Professional art dealers became common in the larger Australian cities only at the end of the 1950s.\textsuperscript{125}

Art critics occupy another crucial position in Bourdieu’s model of the artistic field. Together with commercial galleries, art critics are considered agents of consecration but with a fundamental difference.\textsuperscript{126} Critics are cultural producers whose writings not only designate certain goods as legitimate objects of art discourse but also contribute to the creation of the symbolic meanings which are an essential part of the work of art.\textsuperscript{127} In the early 1950s, the size of the Perth art scene was such that only one art critic worked here, Charles Greenlaw Hamilton. He arrived in Western Australia to join the Education Department as an advisory teacher in art and nature study in 1897, finally retiring from teaching in 1954.\textsuperscript{128} Hamilton was better known as C.G. the art critic of the newspaper The West Australian from 1946 to 1964. His criticism, though brief owing to the constraints of space in the daily press, could be incisive on occasions for instance when he wrote about an exhibition of the W. A. Society of Arts: “The chosen works reach a higher level this year, without showing outstanding quality.”\textsuperscript{129} Hamilton, an informed critic whose credentials included being a foundation and honorary life member of the Australian division of the International Association of Art Critics, was especially supportive of local artists working in a modernist style.\textsuperscript{130} However, a few paragraphs in the newspaper could hardly have provided all the critical commentary so essential to emerging artists exploring new alternatives.

To an extent, Hamilton’s newspaper articles are an indication of rather limited autonomy in the incipient Perth art scene. Bourdieu proposes as the best indicator of autonomy the gap between the hierarchy of artists that depends on public success, in other words on evaluation by the general public, and the hierarchy that depends on the field’s own principles, that is, recognition by the peer

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{125} Smith, Australian Painting, 291-292.
\textsuperscript{126} Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 78.
\textsuperscript{127} Bourdieu, The Rules of Art, 170 and The Field of Cultural Production, 35-36.
\textsuperscript{129} C.G., “Society Gives Art Exhibition,” West Australian, 8 July 1953, 5.
\textsuperscript{130} Mills, “Hamilton, Charles Greenlaw (1874-1967).”
group and by other cultural producers. Given that Hamilton addressed a wide readership in the daily press, his comments and the criteria he employed to assess art were formulated in terms accessible to the general public, with no recourse to specialised art discourses. Hence the hierarchy of artists established by Hamilton’s assessments more or less coincided with the public’s preferences, while alternative hierarchies based on peer evaluation were not widely circulated or documented. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to recover them, with any certitude, and we are left with the picture sketched in the press of an artistic field with little autonomy.

The scarcity of outlets for the publication of art criticism observed in Perth, however, was not exceptional at the time. Ian Burn has noted that between 1942, when *Art in Australia* closed, and 1963, when *Art & Australia* started publication, there were no regular art periodicals with national circulation, except for the modest *Contemporary Art Society Broadsheet*. Writing on the conditions of criticism in the east of Australia during the post-war years, Burn attributed an overreliance upon imported art publications to the lack of regular coverage of contemporary art, which was limited to newspaper reviews. In Perth, though, imported publications which could have offered a wider context for the appreciation of local practice were expensive and extremely rare in the 1950s. The Art Department of the Perth Technical College received the magazine *The Studio* from London but it is doubtful that it reached a large number of readers. It was only towards the end of the decade, as will be seen in the next chapter, that international art publications became more easily accessible.

Regarding the formation of artists, the Perth Technical College and the Claremont Teachers’ College were the two official institutions offering instruction in art in 1953. The former trained mainly commercial artists while the latter offered qualifications in art as part of a teaching degree. Although the subscription to London’s *The Studio* points to an interest in international art among the staff of the Art Department at the Perth Technical College, both institutions had clear vocational focus and fine art was not their primary concern. Yet from a pragmatic point of view, the Colleges

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133 Ibid.
136 A brochure of the Art Department of the Perth Technical College, published in 1951, listed the classes offered as: drawing and design, lettering, modelling, painting and craft work. Part-time classes were held for students of other departments such as Architecture, Domestic Science and Hairdressing. Diploma courses were offered in painting, commercial art and art teaching. Ibid., 65.
had crucial roles in the local scene for they employed artists who otherwise would have struggled to survive solely on their art and at the same time provided a professional environment that facilitated regular exchanges among those artists.

Due largely to the small size of the local art scene and its rudimentary infrastructure, it was extremely difficult to make a living as an artist in the 1950s. In those circumstances, artist organisations were a vital support mechanism. They offered regular exhibition opportunities and, perhaps more importantly for an artist wanting to establish a reputation, opportunities to interact with a peer group and gain their recognition. Among the artist groups that existed in Perth in 1953, the Perth Society of Artists (PSA) was the most prestigious and influential. Formed in 1932 with the aim of upholding professional standards, it conditioned the registration of new members to the approval of existing ones.\footnote{Goodin, *Western Australian Art*, 48-50.} In terms of the theory of the artistic field, the PSA acted as an agent of legitimation, validating the credentials of those aspiring to be considered serious, professional artists.

In 1953, the PSA counted thirty-four members and although many were older, well-established artists, the collective maintained a degree of diversity regarding age and gender.\footnote{A list of the PSA members appears in the last page of the catalogue to the 1953 PSA Annual Exhibition.} Two of the most prominent Perth artists of the last century, Guy Grey-Smith and Howard Taylor, were among the younger members of the PSA back then. Their early careers are discussed later in this chapter. Significantly, women represented half of the PSA’s membership. In the 1930s and 1940s, women played an important role in the visual arts and achieved high public profile in Western Australia.\footnote{Gooding, *Western Australian Art*, 65.} This was still the case in 1953, when women artists held eight of the eighteen solo exhibitions that took place that year (Appendix 1). In the east of Australia, women have been credited with being at the forefront of modernist painting.\footnote{Smith, *The Twentieth Century*, 32. For critic Humphrey McQueen, one of the most influential figures in the development of Australian modernism was painter Margaret Preston. Humphrey McQueen, *The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944* (Sydney: Alternative Publishing, 1979).} In Perth however, the women affiliated to the PSA, with few exceptions, painted mostly landscapes in a style comparable to that of their male colleagues.\footnote{The most notable exceptions are Iris Francis and Portia Bennett, both better known for their work of the 1930s and 1940s. Francis experimented with a variety of modernist styles including Cubism, while Bennett excelled in depictions of modern Perth. For accounts of these artists’ careers see Harpley, *Beyond the Image* and Sally Quin, *Approaches to Modernism: The Art of Portia Bennett, Elise Blumann and Iris Francis* 1930s to 1950s (Crawley, W.A.: Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, The University of Western Australia, 2004).} Typical works by PSA members Audrey Greenhalgh (Fig 1.2) and Katherine Jarvis (Fig 1.3) are illustrated below. The painting showing the centre of Perth in 1953 (Fig 1.1) is by Cyril Lander, another artist affiliated to the PSA.
3. A Moment of Flux: New Directions

Having outlined the main elements of the Perth art scene in 1953, in this section I examine changes that led to an art scene more open to the contemporary ideas and art practices evolving in the rest of the world. The changes also marked the beginnings of what Bourdieu considers the critical phase in the emergence of an artistic field, the achievement of the autonomy that enables the agents of the field to set their own evaluation criteria. At this point, it is helpful to remember that for Bourdieu an artistic field is a field of restricted production. This means a system producing cultural goods, and the instruments for appropriating them, destined primarily for a public of cultural producers. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, since works of art are symbolic goods artists are not their only producers. The critics and curators who interpret the works, who comment on them, contribute to the production of symbolic meanings. Furthermore, teachers, and more

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143 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 115.
generally the educational system, art traders and collectors are instrumental in producing the means for appropriating art. It follows then that all these agents, together with artists, are considered as cultural producers. In Bourdieu’s framework, they are the main public determining the artistic value of cultural goods. The rest of this section compares the type of art valued by the general Perth public to the art promoted by the group of cultural producers who were starting to assert their influence on the art scene in 1953.

According to *WA Art and Artists*, landscape painting was the dominant artistic pursuit in Perth during the first half of the last century. Gooding characterised the naturalistic images preferred by the Perth public as a continuation of the romantic landscape tradition by local artists who depicted the natural environment as a “bountiful resource for wealth and beauty.” Not much had changed by 1953; landscapes still predominated in the exhibitions seen that year. Seemingly, the portrayal of recognisable regional imagery continued to satisfy the taste of the majority of the public interested in art. Among that public, the most influential figure was art collector and benefactor (Sir) Claude Hotchin. A successful businessman, Hotchin did much to encourage the appreciation of art in Western Australia. It is estimated that between 1948 and 1977, he bought and donated some two thousand paintings to regional galleries, hospitals and shire councils throughout the State. A member of the Board of Trustees of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia from 1947 to 1964, Hotchin was chairman of the Board of the Art Gallery from 1960 to 1964. He opened the Claude Hotchin Art Galleries in 1947 and until its closure in 1951, his gallery played a significant role in the art scene for it not only promoted the work of local artists, it also brought art from the east of Australia on a regular basis when no other institution was doing this.

In an effort to encourage local artists, Hotchin organised an annual competition, the Claude Hotchin Art Prize, which ran from 1948 to 1973. The Prize was for the best landscape painted by a Western

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145 Gooding, *Western Australian Art*, 80.
146 Ibid., 79, 80.
147 There are few reproductions of paintings exhibited in 1953 and catalogues were not illustrated then. Yet, the titles in the catalogue of the 1953 PSA Annual Exhibition suggest that out of forty-five paintings included, up to thirty represented landscapes or natural motifs. Numbers are similar in other contemporaneous exhibition catalogues.
149 Ibid. Hotchin gifted paintings to the following towns: Bunbury, Geraldton, Albany, Kattaning, Narrogin, Mount Barker, Collie, Northam, Kalgoorlie, Manjimup and Busselton.
150 Ibid. The Western Australian Art Gallery became a separate entity controlled by a Board of Trustees under the Art Gallery Act of 1959.
151 Gooding, *Western Australian Art*, 72-73.
Australian artist either in oil or watercolour.\textsuperscript{152} Hotchin made his preference for pastoral landscapes clear when he explained the motivation behind this competition:

I wish to inspire our West Australian artists to continue to improve their work and in this way we will, I hope, develop artists in the West who will become the Heysens, Johnsons, Streetons and Gruners of tomorrow.\textsuperscript{153}

![Fig 1.4 Arthur Streeton, Corryong: Landscape with Sheep Grazing, 1932, oil on canvas, 36 x 46 cm, Private Collection, Queensland](image)

The artists Hotchin mentioned as examples for the local practitioners were some of the best-known Australian painters of the inter-war years (Fig 1.4), whose popularity continued into the 1950s but were later derided as the ‘Gum Tree School.’ They created many of the pastoral landscapes left out of the history of Australian art written in the 1960s and 1970s chiefly by art historian Bernard Smith and critic Robert Hughes.\textsuperscript{154} While questioning the rationale for this omission, Ian Burn elucidated why these images became so popular. Burn believed that one of the reasons for the popularity of the pastoral landscapes was the availability to all viewers of judgements that did not require specialised knowledge of art but instead relied on familiarity.\textsuperscript{155} For Burn, these images did not discriminate among viewers; most of them were capable of judging the competence, significance and subject of the landscape pictures.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{152} “To Help Art,” \textit{West Australian}, 24 July 1948.
\textsuperscript{153} Claude Hotchin quoted in “To Help Art.”
\textsuperscript{154} Smith treats the early careers of Streeton and Heysen as part of the Heidelberg School in \textit{Australian Painting}, but dismisses their post-WWI paintings as reactionary. Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 168-170 and 195-197.
\textsuperscript{155} Burn, \textit{National Life & Landscapes}, 101.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
works of art by a general public.\footnote{Burn’s discussion of the characteristics and popularity of the inter-war landscapes is part of a larger argument on their position in the evolution of Australian art. Although not totally unrelated, his argument is not central to the concerns of this chapter.} Based on his research into art appreciation, Bourdieu came to an equivalent conclusion: people not familiar with specialised art discourses apply to works of art the perceptual schemes that structure “their everyday perception of everyday existence.”\footnote{Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction}, 44.} Later on, when academics and curators began to assess Australian art deploying specialised art discourses developed to interpret the art that became main stream in Europe and North America, then the landscapes favoured by the general public could not meet the criteria to qualify either as significant or advanced art. But this was not yet the case in 1953, at least not in Perth.

The winners of the 1953 Claude Hotchin Art Prize, \textit{Banksias in Sunlight} (Fig 1.3) by Katherine Jarvis and \textit{Early Hours, Darling Ranges} (Fig 1.5) by Ernest Bearsby, exemplify the kind of art appreciated in Perth in the early 1950s.\footnote{Hotchin presented both paintings to the Town of Narrogin in 1953, as part of a gift of thirty-two paintings. “Presentation of Paintings to Narrogin,” \textit{West Australian}, 12 November 1953; C. G., “Hotchin Prize Paintings Exhibited,” \textit{West Australian}, 9 December 1953.} In their simple style, both paintings share with the pastoral landscapes admired by Hotchin a static quality that evokes a sense of peace and quietude (Fig 1.4). By this stage however, a new kind of art patrons with very different preferences and expectations were starting to change the local art scene.

The new patrons were academics and professionals interested in the modernist art that had appeared in Europe in the early decades of the last century. Keenly aware of the difficulty of seeing this type of art in Perth, in 1947 they formed the Art Group with the aim of promoting the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{early_hours_darling_ranges_1953}
\caption{Ernest Bearsby, \textit{Early Hours, Darling Ranges}, 1953, oil on canvas, 42 x 53.5 cm, Town of Narrogin Art Collection}
\end{figure}
“advancement of contemporary art in the community.” At various stages, the group counted among its members art collectors Dr Salek Minc and Dr Roy Constable; artists Elise Blumann, Ferdinand Korwill, and Guy and Helen Grey-Smith; AGWA curator Robert Campbell; Professor Allan Edwards from the University of Western Australia and art critic Charles G. Hamilton. Several members of the Art Group had first-hand knowledge of European modernism. German-born Elise Blumann trained as an artist in Berlin between 1917 and 1919. Guy Grey-Smith studied at the Chelsea School of Art in 1946-1947. Dr Salek Minc, a physician of Polish origin, frequented artistic circles while studying in Rome in the 1920s.

Clearly the members of the Art Group were cultural producers. Many of the changes examined in the rest of this chapter were either initiated or supported by individuals affiliated to this group. One of their first activities was the presentation of lectures, which in 1950 included “50 Years of Picasso” by Elise Blumann, “The Trend of Modern Art in Europe” by Allan Edwards and “Matisse” by Guy Grey-Smith. It is illuminating to compare the titles of these lectures with the list of artists proposed by Claude Hotchin as models for the local painters. The comparison shows the way the Perth art scene was dividing, on one side the large section of the public who appreciated the landscapes of Gruner, Heysen and Streeton (Fig 1.4) and on the other the cultural producers who admired the art of Picasso and Matisse.

Eventually, after overcoming the objections of the trustees of AGWA, members of the Art Group established the Art Gallery Society in 1951, which enabled them to organise activities encouraging the appreciation of modernist art at AGWA. Arguably, their most important contribution in this respect was the donation of works to the State Art Collection. The Art Gallery Society presented Frank Hinder’s Flight into Egypt (Fig 1.6) as its first gift to AGWA in 1953. The winner of the Blake Prize for religious art, this painting with its decidedly modernist combination of cubist-like structure

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160 Dr Salek Minc to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of AGWA, letter dated 28 November 1949, Art Group file, AGWA Research Library. In this letter, Dr Minc indicates 1947 as the year the Art Group was formed.
161 Art Group file, AGWA Research Library.
162 Bromfield, Elise Blumann, 38.
163 Gaynor, Guy Grey-Smith, 29-35.
165 Invitations to the lectures by Elise Blumann and Allan Edwards, Art Group file, AGWA Research Library. The information on the lecture by Grey-Smith appears in Gaynor, Guy Grey-Smith, 41.
166 Since the 1950s, the tension between internationalism and regionalism has persisted in Australian art. The recasting of this tension in terms of the centre/ periphery debate as a conflict between regionalism and provincialism in the 1980s is discussed in Chapter Four.
167 Annual Report of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, 30 June 1952, item 30, n.p.. The current version of the Art Gallery Society is known as Friends of the Art Gallery WA.
and vibrant colours signalled the direction in which the Society wanted AGWA to move. Clearly, the art embraced by the Art Gallery Society leaned towards European modernism and had little to do with the outback imagery of the best-known Australian modernists of the time such as Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale and Arthur Boyd.

Fig 1.6 Frank Hinder, *Flight into Egypt*, 1952, oil and tempera on board, 96.5 x 75.5 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, gift of the Friends of the Art Gallery of Western Australia

By this stage, the members of the Art Gallery Society were not alone in their efforts to bring new art to the Perth public. They found a formidable ally in the then recently appointed director of AGWA, Laurence (Laurie) Thomas. Educated at the University of Melbourne, Thomas moved to Perth to take the position of assistant temporary lecturer in English at the University of Western Australia in 1939. After the war, Thomas received a scholarship for ex-servicemen and attended King’s College, Cambridge from 1947 to 1949. Back in Australia, he was employed as an art critic and then as assistant director of the National Gallery of Victoria, becoming director of AGWA in March 1952.

Thomas attended a prestigious British university in the late 1940s when, following the end of World War II, Britain was being rebuilt and a profound questioning of the role of the visual arts in British society was taking place. According to British art historian Martin Harrison, the need for renewal was felt by artists and critics preoccupied by the insularity of British art and by its low international standing. For the new generation who wanted to revitalise art, the Neo-Romantic landscapes that

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169 Ibid.

170 Ibid.

171 Harrison, *Transition*, 16.
had been highly regarded before the war came to represent the art of the past.\textsuperscript{172} One of the most prominent participants in these debates, painter and critic Patrick Heron, sought to bridge the divide between figurative and abstract art by turning to the colourful School of Paris as a model of modern art practice for the artists of his generation.\textsuperscript{173} He was far from being the only one looking in that direction. In the immediate post-war years, London witnessed a revival of interest in French art with \textit{Picasso and Matisse} as the first important exhibition to open after the war and the establishment of the Anglo-French Art Centre in 1946.\textsuperscript{174} In all likelihood, Thomas learned about the efforts to revitalise British art and the different options proposed by artists and intellectuals, especially in light of his change of professional path to become an art critic and curator on his return to Australia. The search for ways to renew British art and the alternatives it opened were to have an effect on Western Australian art too and not only through Thomas. As discussed below, the three leading Perth modernist painters of the 1950s and 1960s trained in Britain in the post-war years.

Thomas stayed in Perth between 1952 and 1956. In that time, he did much to favour the currents of change that were gathering momentum then. He expanded AGWA’s collection by buying contemporary art, organised more frequent and more diversified exhibitions and promoted the work of local artists, especially those working in a modernist style. For them Thomas’s critical advice was crucial at a time when art criticism was in very short supply. His support for emerging artists extended to acquisitions although at a rather modest scale due to budget constraints.\textsuperscript{175} His first acquisitions included the modernist paintings \textit{The Rabbiter} by well-known Melbourne artist Arthur Boyd and \textit{Karri Forest} (Fig 1.7) by emerging local Guy Grey-Smith.\textsuperscript{176} The following fiscal year he added one more work by Grey-Smith, \textit{Still Life Chrysanthemums} (Fig 1.8), to the State Art Collection.\textsuperscript{177} The post-impressionist features of Grey-Smith’s paintings, illustrated below, might have appealed to Thomas who had recently witnessed the admiration French painting still commanded in Britain.

\textsuperscript{172} Garlake, \textit{New Art New World}, 41; Harrison, \textit{Transition}, 29.
\textsuperscript{174} Garlake, \textit{New Art New World}, 38; Harrison, \textit{Transition}, 14-15. Lauded by critics, the \textit{Picasso and Matisse} exhibition shocked many visitors to the Victoria and Albert Museum, which might have confirmed the view that this was radical new art in 1945.
\textsuperscript{176} Annual Report of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, 30 June 1953, Item 18 Acquisitions, n.p.
\textsuperscript{177} Annual Report of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, 30 June 1954, 15.
Another manifestation of the new emphasis on recent art at AGWA was the replacement of its annual Art Competition, held for the last time in 1953. In its place, the Art Gallery Society sponsored the Perth Prize for Contemporary Art from 1954. To promote the appreciation of local work, the competition had an exclusively Western Australian section. The judges of the first Perth Prize for Contemporary Art, Laurie Thomas, Professor Allan Edwards, Dr Roy Constable and a representative of The West Australian, selected St Xavier’s Thorn and a Fetish (Fig 1.9) by Robert Juniper as the winner of the local section. 178 This decision made clear the meaning of the term ‘Contemporary’ in the competition’s name but provoked much controversy.179

179 Ibid., 155-157.
Thomas, the acknowledged expert in art, took centre stage in the ensuing debate, explaining and defending Juniper’s modernist style.\(^{180}\) Thus by 1954, AGWA, the alleged ‘morgue’ of the 1940s, was endorsing the most progressive local art and the influence of its director on the emerging artistic field was such that Christine Sharkey considered that Thomas had “institutionalized modernism” by the time he left Perth in 1956.\(^{181}\) It is not clear, though, that by 1956 modernism had been institutionalised in Perth, but it is safe to say that Thomas did much to advance the cause of the local version of late modernism and that he did it with the support of other cultural producers such as the members of the Art Group and Art Gallery Society. Significantly Dr Roy Constable, a prominent collector and member of the Art Group, bought *St Xavier’s Thorn and a Fetish*. In 1985, he donated the painting to another institution which was instrumental in opening the local art scene to new ideas, the University of Western Australia.

The University of Western Australia (UWA) owns one of the most important collections of Australian art in Perth, second only to the State Art Collection. UWA began collecting contemporary art in 1953.\(^{182}\) At the time, it had more resources available for art acquisitions than AGWA thanks to funds donated specifically for the purpose of encouraging Australian literature and art.\(^{183}\) Part of these funds was destined to “the acquisition of some outstandingly good contemporary Australian

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 157.


After serious disagreements with the Trustees of the Museum and Art Gallery regarding funding and his emphasis on modernist art, Thomas resigned in acrimonious circumstances and left for Sydney.\(^{182}\) UWA had an art collection before 1953, but it consisted mainly of reproductions of European artworks and a few historical Australian works received as donations. Alexander, *Campus at Crawley*, 815-816.

\(^{183}\) To encourage Australian painters and writers, Samuel Furphy gave £1,000 to UWA in memory of his father author Joseph Furphy in 1949. The Tom Collins Memorial Fund was established with these funds. In 1951, part of the estate of Samuel Furphy went to UWA as the Tom Collins Bequest for the same purposes. Ibid., 817.
painting or paintings.”

Professor of English Allan Edwards was assigned the responsibility of selecting the works to fulfil these intentions. He requested the advice of AGWA curator James Cook and then of his successor Laurie Thomas, who became Edwards’s “chief mentor and guide” on painting. After lengthy negotiations and with the support of Thomas, Edwards completed the first acquisitions of contemporary Australian art, twelve paintings by Sidney Nolan (Figs 1.10 and 1.11).

Curator John Barrett-Lennard has described the purchases for UWA’s collection during the 1950s as bold and innovative, contemporary and challenging. The purchase of the twelve paintings by Nolan was certainly a bold move that set the tone for the future collection. Nolan was then a promising artist, part of the generation of painters whose stark images of the Australian outback

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185 Allan Edwards, oral history interviews with Chris Jeffery on 9 and 16 December 1987, “Art Acquisitions by the University of Western Australia Tom Collins Bequest,” 20, transcript, UWA Archives.
186 Barrett-Lennard and Watson, A Partial View, 10.
eventually replaced the pastoral landscapes as symbols of Australia, eventually but not yet, not in 1953. At this stage he had been exhibiting in commercial galleries for five years only. Back then, the paintings he sold to UWA were the largest group of his works to enter a public collection. The negative reaction is understandable because few individuals, even among UWA academics, were familiar with modernist Australian painting. As indicated before, only the Claude Hotchin Galleries had exhibited art from the east of Australia on a regular basis until its closure in 1951. However given Hotchin’s enthusiastic preference for pastoral landscapes, (Figs 1.4 and 1.5) it is highly unlikely that he ever showed paintings by Nolan, or other Australian modernists, in his gallery. Thomas organised the first important exhibition of contemporary Australian art as part of the 1954 Perth Festival. It opened a few months after an exhibition of French contemporary art, which I discuss in Section 4, had caused much dismay. The press review of the Australian exhibition, illustrated with reproductions of paintings by Sidney Nolan and Arthur Boyd, makes clear the bewilderment of the local public when confronted with what they saw as alien pictures:

Many people who found themselves in a state of intellectual confusion after inspecting the recent French art exhibition in Perth no doubt attributed the peculiarities of many of the exhibits to the traditional eccentricity of the French race. They probably felt quite relieved at the fact that they were living in earthy, matter-of-fact Australia, where such things could never happen. In which case, they are in for something of a shock when they see the show of Australia’s modern artists at the Perth Art Gallery. The works of Australian artists will cause just as many headaches and arguments as those of the French painters.

4. The Artists and the Exhibitions

Changes in the art seen in Perth in 1953 signalled the new directions emerging artists were starting to explore, which would eventually lead to a fully-fledged local version of modernism. By concentrating on five key exhibitions, I outline those changes in this section. First, I consider two exhibitions that included work representative of the art appreciated by a majority of the public in the early 1950s. Then, I focus on three exhibitions that presented the new kind of art that satisfied

187 Ibid., 94. A search in the databases of the National Gallery of Victoria, the Queensland Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of South Australia Art and the Art Gallery of New South Wales shows the number of paintings by Sidney Nolan they had acquired by 1953 as 3, 4, 2 and 2, respectively.
188 Allan Edwards, oral history interview with Anne Reid, 16 March 1984, 26, transcript, UWA Archives.
189 “Australia’s Answer to the French Art Exhibition,” Western Mail, 7 January 1954.
the expectations and preferences of the group of cultural producers who were starting to assert their influence on the emerging artistic field.

AGWA’s Annual Art Competition, the largest exhibition of Western Australian art in 1953, was fairly representative of the Perth artistic community. A wide cross section of local painters participated in this competition, from well-established practitioners such as Cyril Lander (Fig 1.1), Portia Bennett and James Goatcher (Fig 1.12) to emerging and commercial artists. The entries of two of the best-known Western Australian artists of the last century, Guy Grey-Smith and Howard Taylor then beginning their careers, received much praise from critic C.G. Hamilton. Grey-Smith’s Still Life, Chrysanthemums (Fig 1.8) could have won the competition, Hamilton claimed, if that type of art had been “seriously considered” in Perth. Laurie Thomas took it seriously and purchased Still Life, Chrysanthemums, adding a second example of Perth Post-Impressionism to the State Art Collection. Taylor’s Landscape (Fig 1.13) in tempera just missed being a striking success, in Hamilton’s opinion.

Grey-Smith and Taylor started their artistic careers in similar circumstances, brought about by the upheavals of World War II. Both saw combat as pilots, were interned as prisoners of war and trained as artists in Britain after the end of the war. Taylor attended the Birmingham College of Art as a part-time student from 1946 to 1948. Back in Western Australia, he held his first solo exhibition at Newspaper House Art Gallery in 1949 and another in 1951. However, while Grey-Smith had two

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190 James Goatcher, winner of the 1950 Claude Hotchin Prize for watercolours, was affiliated to the W.A. Society of Arts. He held annual exhibitions at Newspaper House Art Gallery from 1944 to 1954. Alan McCulloch, Encyclopedia of Australian Art (Hawthorn, Vic.: Hutchinson of Australia, 1984), 507.
solo shows in 1953, *Landscape* was the only work Taylor exhibited in that year. Between 1952 and 1956, while teaching painting and drawing at Perth Technical College on a part-time basis, Taylor showed just a few works in group exhibitions.\(^{194}\) He seems to have been occupied exploring diverse styles and techniques as exemplified by two paintings from this period, *Landscape* (Fig 1.13) and *Pine Trees* (Fig 1.14). Although radically different, they complement each other in signalling future developments in Taylor’s art.

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*Fig 1.13 Howard Taylor, Landscape, 1953, oil and tempera on board, 36 x 56 cm, Janet Holmes à Court Collection, exhibited: 1953 Annual Art Competition, Art Gallery of Western Australia, cat. 39*

*Fig 1.14 Howard Taylor, Pine Trees, 1953, oil on composition board, 52 x 81.7 cm, Private Collection*

Curator Gary Dufour has noted the influence of Paul Nash on *Pine Trees*, pointing particularly to the way visual facts are selected from nature to compose a picture.\(^{195}\) Nash, one of the leading British artists at the end of World War II, was especially recognised for his emphasis on personal constructions of place.\(^ {196}\) As British art historian Margaret Garlake has remarked: “Nash established a model for modernist painting about places in which the ordering intellect of the individual is


Taylor’s return to Britain as an art student in 1946 coincided with Nash’s death which was commemorated by the Tate Gallery with *Paul Nash: A Memorial Exhibition*. Taylor was able to see the large number of paintings and drawings included in this comprehensive exhibition during its tour of Britain in 1948. The example of Nash, coming so early in Taylor’s career, might have been fundamental in establishing his life-long intellectual approach to art and nature. The other painting, though, hints at sources of formal inspiration. *Landscape* (Fig 1.13), an abstract exercise on geometrical relationships, suggests that by 1953 Taylor was aware of the constructivist explorations of the British avant-garde led by Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo in St Ives in the 1940s. *Landscape* is closer, formally, to the work of Nicholson and Gabo than to the paintings of Nash. It was in this direction that Taylor’s art was going to develop from his constructivist works of the late 1950s to his minimalist sculptures of the 1990s which are examined in Chapter Five.

The 1953 Annual Exhibition of the PSA, held at Newspaper House Art Gallery, is another exhibition that can be considered as representative of the local artistic production. It was opened by Claude Hotchin, who expressed the assured view that the PSA’s Annual Exhibition was the “measuring stick” of local achievements in painting. Posterity’s judgement has not been so favourable and most of the works on display then have been forgotten; only a couple entered public collections. *Quarry Dust* (Fig 1.15) by Bryant McDiven is one of them.

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Fig 1.15 Bryant McDiven, *Quarry Dust*, 1952, watercolour, 36 x 47 cm, ECU Art Collection, exhibited: 1953 PSA Annual Exhibition, cat. 10

197 Ibid., 68.
198 Taylor returned to Perth at the end of the war in 1945. The following year he went back to the United Kingdom as an art student on a RAAF rehabilitation grant. Dufour, *Howard Taylor: Phenomena*, 152.
202 The other work, Audrey Greenhalgh’s *Mountain Tree (In the Australian Alps)*, is in the City of Fremantle Art Collection.
As indicated in Section 2, the majority of the members of the PSA were older, well-established artists. They worked in representational styles forged mostly locally to produce regional images (Figs 1.3 and 1.15), which were about to become irrelevant for the cultural producers setting the new criteria to evaluate art. The future belonged to artists who chose not to exhibit with the PSA and who were familiar with the art practices that emerged in Britain and France in the post-war years. Howard Taylor and Guy Grey-Smith were in this group.\(^{203}\) Furthermore, the era of the art society was drawing to a close, and not only in Perth. The Salon-type exhibitions of the societies of artists became less significant as the 1950s progressed and commercial galleries appeared around Australia.\(^{204}\)

By far the most influential exhibition of 1953, *French Painting Today: Peintres Vivants de l’Ecole de Paris* came to Perth after touring the other state capitals. It was part of the plan developed by the directors of the state galleries to bring to Australia substantial exhibitions of contemporary art every two or three years.\(^{205}\) *French Painting Today* opened the series and marked a turning point in the history of art in Perth.\(^{206}\) Laurie Thomas started his very effective promotion of *French Painting Today* by announcing to the press: "This is the most exciting exhibition ever to hit Perth."\(^{207}\) And it really hit the public who saw for the first time original works by already-consecrated Masters such as Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Marc Chagall and Max Ernst. The paintings and tapestries in the exhibition covered mostly the period from 1925 to 1952 with an emphasis on 1940s School of Paris.\(^{208}\) The paintings of the School of Paris, with their mix of Post-impressionism, Cubism and Surrealism, astonished a public hitherto accustomed to appreciate above all carefully-crafted landscapes. Unsurprisingly, controversy ensued and the number of visitors grew, reaching the equivalent of AGWA’s annual visitation of 20,000 during the one month the exhibition stayed in Perth.\(^{209}\)

The whole exercise was a success for the group of cultural producers interested in promoting modernist art. It gave them an opportunity to initiate the local public in the appreciation of a vastly different kind of art. For instance, critic C.G. explained:

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\(^{203}\) Although affiliated to the PSA, neither Taylor nor Grey-Smith exhibited in the PSA’s annual group show.

\(^{204}\) Smith, *Australian Painting*, 291-292.

\(^{205}\) Smith, Gooding and Juniper, *Robert Juniper*, 66.

\(^{206}\) The other exhibitions were *Italian Art of the Twentieth Century* (1956), *Contemporary Canadian Painters* (1957), *British Abstract Painting* (1958) and *Contemporary Japanese Art* (1959). Ibid., 67.

\(^{207}\) "French Pictures Arrive," *West Australian*, 29 August 1953.


\(^{209}\) Annual Report Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, 30 June 1954, 19.
Go with an open mind. Look at the pictures as individual expressions. Select those you like best and try to appreciate their pictorial quality rather than their meaning. Try to find beauty of line, form, pattern or colour. Do not worry about the work you cannot appreciate. Do not try to compare it with ordinary painting - it has quite a different intention and origin.\textsuperscript{210}

*French Painting Today* had a lasting effect on the public's awareness of the changes happening outside Australia and contributed to a more accepting attitude towards non-realist art. Bernard Smith noted that this exhibition was an exceptional opportunity for a generation of young Australian artists to see original European modernist paintings for the first time.\textsuperscript{211} For Smith, the impact of *French Painting Today* on young artists was such that he counted it as one of the inspirations for the emergence of abstraction in Australia.\textsuperscript{212} In Perth, however, the young modernists who were starting their careers in the 1950s did not need to experience *French Painting Today* in order to learn about contemporary European art. Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor and Robert Juniper all had opportunities to appreciate European modernism first hand when they were undergoing artistic training in Britain. What *French Painting Today* did was to validate, for their reluctant local public, the work they were producing at the time (Figs 1.8, 1.13 and 1.16).

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Guy Grey-Smith’s solo exhibition of 1953 signalled unambiguously the new direction art in Perth was taking. It was reviewed by C.G. Hamilton and reportedly considered by Laurie Thomas as “the best show” he had seen up to that point in Perth.\textsuperscript{213} Hamilton showed his support for the new developments in local art when he joined Thomas’s enthusiastic commendation of Grey-Smith’s work. The critic counted among the strengths of the painter the non-realist interpretation of the

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\textsuperscript{210} C.G. “French Art Covers Exciting Period,” *West Australian*, 8 September 1953.
\textsuperscript{211} Smith, *Australian Painting*, 304-305.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 353.
\textsuperscript{213} Laurie Thomas quoted in C.G., “Artist Depicts Life around Him,” *West Australian*, 27 May 1953.
natural environment, commenting particularly on the artist’s bold design and use of colour (Figs 1.16 and 1.17). As discussed in Section Three, Grey-Smith attended art school in London in the post-war years when the British scene was marked by debates on the need for artistic renewal and a number of artists looked to the School of Paris as an example of modernist practice. It is very likely that Grey-Smith came across these debates while studying at the Chelsea School of Art, where he was taught by artists Ceri Richards and Robert Medley. Richards and Medley, active participants in the London art scene, were among those painters who explored the French option and adopted the use of bright colours as a signifier of modernity. Importantly, they were part of the generation of British artists who heard Patrick Heron’s call for the reconciliation of modernism and convention, advanced art and majority taste to define a modernist practice of the middle ground, halfway “between pure abstraction and abject representation.” I would argue that together with his formal training, Grey-Smith brought to Perth this kind of ethos that was to inform the development of his art in the 1950s.

Fig 1.17 Guy Grey-Smith, Jarrahs, 1953, oil on canvas, 61.2 x 50.8 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, exhibited: Guy Grey-Smith Exhibition, Newspaper House Art Gallery, 1953, cat. 7

Grey-Smith’s knowledge of French painting, however, did not depend solely on what he learnt from his art teachers. He travelled to France to see the work of the French Masters before coming back to Perth in 1947. Honey Eaters (Fig 1.16) and Jarrahs (Fig 1.17) are examples of the paintings on display at his 1953 exhibition, both show the Post-impressionist lessons he had learned in Britain and France. Honey Eaters is the more Cezanne-like of the two, with its use of colour that defines the

214 Ibid.
215 Ibid., 29.
216 Garlake, New Art New World, 45-46 and 133-134.
217 Patrick Heron quoted in Garlake, New Art New World, 45.
218 Gaynor, Guy Grey-Smith, 33-35.
planes of the picture and creates a flat pattern, emphasising the main motif of the work. In *Jarrah* the brilliant palette makes the geometric structure less evident, although it is not less important, as can be seen in the tree tops describing carefully controlled curves to encircle the composition. By 1953 Guy Grey-Smith was well on his way to establish a reputation as one of the most promising painters in Perth. He had the support of key agents in the emerging artistic field: the director of AGWA, Laurie Thomas; the local critic C.G. Hamilton and influential art patron Roy Constable.

After his successful exhibition, Grey-Smith left for London and enrolled at the Central School of Art and Crafts to study fresco painting.\(^\text{219}\) According to Garlake, some of the most radical developments in British art during the post-war years took place in craft-based schools.\(^\text{220}\) The Central School of Art and Crafts, one of the largest of these schools, had a formidable group of promising artists on its staff in the early 1950s.\(^\text{221}\) Once again, Grey-Smith was in the middle of a group of artists preoccupied with exploring ways of bringing about the renewal of art. For some of those artists, the interest in French art had not diminished but now it had a more definite focus, the paintings of Russian-born French artist Nicholas de Staël. The first solo exhibition by de Staël in London, in 1952, caused a sensation among modernist painters.\(^\text{222}\) Garlake claims that his paintings had an immense impact on British artists as a model of abstract painting between lyrical abstraction and the hard-edged precision of geometric abstraction.\(^\text{223}\) Patrick Heron went as far as stating that de Staël “stood at the beginning of a new development in painting.”\(^\text{224}\) Grey-Smith’s encounter with the work of Nicholas de Staël had an effect on the rest of his career, which is discussed in Chapter Two.

The last exhibition considered in this section was organised jointly by sculptor Patricia Jordanoff and painter Robert Juniper at the Adult Education Rooms. Like Taylor and Grey-Smith, Juniper became one of the pioneers of modernism in Perth after studying art in Britain, but unlike his colleagues he did not follow courses in fine art, training instead as a commercial artist at the Beckenham School of Art and Industrial Design in Kent between 1943 and 1947.\(^\text{225}\) Juniper’s student years at Beckenham gave him a wide view of contemporary art. Some of his teachers were enthusiasts of European modernism and through them Juniper became familiar with the work of Picasso, Braque, Matisse

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\(^\text{219}\) Ibid., 45.
\(^\text{221}\) Ibid., 30. Artists of the calibre of (Sir) Eduardo Paolozzi taught at the Central School of Art and Crafts during the 1950s. Other artists affiliated to the Independent Group, which would lead to the emergence of Pop Art in Britain, were also on the staff of this School.
\(^\text{222}\) Harrison, *Transition*, 18.
\(^\text{224}\) Patrick Heron quoted in Garlake, *New Art New World*, 43.
\(^\text{225}\) Sharkey, “An Investigation into the Conditions of Practice,” 74.
and Paul Klee.\textsuperscript{226} The latter was to be a life-long source of inspiration. As a student, he also visited exhibitions in London regularly, thus he came to admire the paintings of British artists Stanley Spencer, Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash, John Piper, Victor Pasmore and Ben Nicholson.\textsuperscript{227}

Juniper was back in Western Australia in 1949. Having exhibited only a few works in two group exhibitions in 1951 and 1952, he was hardly known by the time of his joint exhibition with Patricia Jordanoff in 1953.\textsuperscript{228} This event helped Juniper to establish key relationships with influential members of the Perth art scene among them UWA Professor Allan Edwards, AGWA director Laurie Thomas and artists Elizabeth Durack, Helen and Guy Grey-Smith.\textsuperscript{229} Thomas, in particular, did much to establish the reputation of the young painter as his most important supporter in the controversy that followed Juniper’s winning of the Perth Prize for Contemporary Art in 1954.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig1.18.png}
\caption{Robert Juniper, \textit{Greek Orthodox Church}, 1953, oil on panel, 43.5 x 57.2 cm, Private Collection}
\end{figure}

\textit{Greek Orthodox Church} (Fig 1.18) is an example of the work exhibited by Juniper in 1953. His study of John Piper’s images is evident in this painting from the choice of subject, reminiscent of Piper’s old churches, to the richly textured application of paint. However, the decorative effect of the brilliant colours is a departure from the British artist’s rather sombre compositions and seems to be a characteristic of Juniper’s developing style. The use of high-key colours (Figs 1.17 and 1.18) might have been a factor in the favourable reception of Juniper’s paintings in the 1950s. As indicated above, Grey-Smith’s colourful compositions were appreciated by the local supporters of modernism.

\textsuperscript{228} Smith, Gooding and Juniper, \textit{Robert Juniper}, 113.
while the association between bright colours and modernity was reinforced by the exhibition *French Painting Today*.

5. Aboriginal Art and Artists

The previous sections of this chapter have continued the narrative of *WA Art and Artists*. Section 5 introduces an element not included in that narrative, the history of Aboriginal art in Perth. Although this kind of art achieved some recognition in the 1940s, only one exhibition was documented in 1953. Organised by author Mary Durack and presented at UWA, the exhibition included recent work by Noongar artists Parnell Dempster and Reynold Hart. Information about the event appearing in two newspaper notes is brief; it includes names of the artists, venue, dates and a summary description of the pictures on display as drawings, some in colour and some black and white. The pastel *Untitled (Landscape with Fallen Tree)* (Fig 1.19) is an example of Dempster’s work in 1953.

Fig 1.19 Parnell Dempster, *Untitled (Landscape with Fallen Tree)*, 1953, pastel and graphite, 22.9 X 29.2 cm, The Herbert Mayer Collection of Carrolup Artwork, Curtin University Art Collection

Dempster and Hart were only seventeen and fifteen, respectively, at the time. They had learned to draw as children while living at Carrolup Native Settlement. Located near the town of Katanning approximately 300 km south-east of Perth, Carrolup was one of the remote camps controlled by the Western Australian Government where Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal children were interned, away from their families, with the aim of assimilating them into Australian settler society. The

education of the children interned in the Native Settlements consisted mainly in preparing them for a life as labourers, but at Carrolup key changes occurred with the appointment of teacher Noel White in 1945. He decided to give some art instruction to the children in his charge and encouraged them to use drawings as records of their experiences of nature. The Noongar children proved to be good learners and soon were creating images of their surroundings which were exhibited for the first time at Boans Department Store in Perth in 1947 and later in New Zealand, India, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. The reception everywhere was enthusiastic. An illustrated review of the exhibition of Carrolup paintings in New Delhi appeared in the London-based magazine *The Studio* in 1950. *The Studio* was then one of the most prestigious and influential art magazines published in English. The article on the Carrolup show is the only record of this magazine ever reviewing works by Western Australian artists in the 1950s.

Carrolup Native Settlement had been closed for two years by the time Dempster and Hart were showing their work at UWA. Given the scant attention paid to this exhibition, it seems likely that local interest in the paintings from Carrolup was waning by 1953. This trend was going to continue, as they were almost forgotten for nearly forty years. There is evidence, however, that the paintings made by the Noongar youngsters had been highly regarded at least until 1951 when they were included in the *Jubilee Arts and Crafts Exhibition* held at the Perth Town Hall to celebrate fifty years of Australian Federation. The organiser, Claude Hotchin, selected for the native art section drawings from Carrolup and watercolours by the Western Arrernte artists Albert Namatjira and Edwin Pareroultja. Namatjira’s landscapes (Fig 1.20) were enormously popular in the 1940s and 1950s when large numbers of reproductions reached mass audiences across Australia. In Perth, they had the added prestige of being collected by Hotchin, the most influential art patron in the city. We can infer then that the standing of the Carrolup pictures was considerable since Hotchin judged them worthy of display next to Namatjira’s.

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239 Carrolup art came back to the public’s attention in 1992, thanks to the exhibition *Nyungar Landscapes* shown at UWA’s Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.
241 Ibid. The name Arrernte is also spelled Aranda. I follow the spelling used by curators Wally Caruana and Brenda Croft in their writings on Albert Namatjira.
Looking at Dempter’s *Untitled (Landscape with Fallen Tree)* (Fig 1.19) with its simplified but colourful rendition of a typical South West landscape, it is not difficult to understand why Hotchin and many others among the Perth public might have found an image like this appealing. It was the type of recognisable regional landscape that they appreciated (Figs 1.3, 1.5 and 1.12). But the influence of art patrons such as Hotchin was waning by 1953 and this type of imagery, whether created by Aboriginal or settler Western Australian artists, was going to be increasingly ignored by the key agents of the emerging artistic field.

Fig 1.20 Albert Namatjira, *Waterhole, MacDonnell Ranges*, 1950s, watercolour, 26 x 36.3 cm, Art Gallery of South Australia

Ian Burn, writing in 1991, remarked how in spite of their popularity Namatjira and his followers of the Hermannsburg School had been largely ignored by the major state galleries, art historians and critics. The art establishment accorded a similar treatment to the paintings from Carrolup, which despite their public success were not seen in art galleries but in places such as Boans Department Store, the Perth Town Hall and UWA. Furthermore, the 1951 exhibition was an ‘arts and crafts’ exhibition hence the implication that these pictures were seen as a form of native crafts, albeit highly skilled, cannot be excluded. I would argue that the disparity between the popularity and critical appreciation of Noongar art is one more sign of the emergence of an autonomous artistic field, characterised by the growing disjunction between art valued according to the criteria of a large undifferentiated public and art valued according to the specialised art discourses mastered by cultural producers. This is not to say that other factors might not have played a part in the neglect of the Noongar landscapes. Ian Burn and Terry Smith, adopting a post-colonial perspective, examined the discourses surrounding the reception and subsequent disregard of Namatjira’s paintings. Both found that cultural prejudices among critics and curators, particularly their views on the authenticity

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244 Burn, *Dialogue*, 54-55.
245 UWA did not have an art gallery until 1973. Information on UWA’s first gallery appears in Chapter Three.
of what they considered ‘primitive’ art, had much to do with the devaluation of Namatjira’s landscapes.\textsuperscript{246} It is highly likely that the same happened in the case of Noongar art but not much was written about it after 1951, hence there is not enough documentation to support an assessment of how cultural assumptions affected its reception.

The gap between the general public and the emergent artistic field can be appreciated also in the article published in \textit{The West Australian} about the exhibition \textit{Twelve Australian Artists} shown in London in 1953. The writer of the article found remarkable that work by Namatjira had not been included in the exhibition alongside paintings by artists such as William Dobell, Russell Drysdale, Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan (Figs 1.10 and 1.11).\textsuperscript{247} Evidently, the journalist and the directors of the state galleries, who selected only modernist artists for the London exhibition, had a very different conception of contemporary Australian art that merited international exposure.

At this point, it is pertinent to acknowledge that my examination of Noongar and settler Western Australian art within the same theoretical framework is indebted to work done by New Zealand art historian Damian Skinner. He has proposed the development of what he calls “settler-colonial art history,” to study settler and indigenous art production within the same analytical framework as a productive way of gaining better understanding of both.\textsuperscript{248} I am not claiming, though, that my discussion of Noongar and settler art in Perth is a direct application of Skinner’s concept of settler-colonial art history. Rather, his extensive analysis of the issues at stake in this kind of art history has helped me to construct a narrative that places the evolution of Noongar art in the context of the events observed in the Perth art scene. The deployment of Skinner’s approach in this case has been facilitated by my focus on the art practices of an Aboriginal group who adopted the conventions of settler landscape art in response to colonial policies of assimilation. Subsequent chapters follow the evolution of this practice as a medium of exchange with the dominant culture.

Before closing this section, I must mention the work of Elizabeth Durack, one of the most popular settler artists in the 1950s. In her youth, Durack spent time in her family’s cattle stations living among Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.\textsuperscript{249} Self-taught, in the 1940s she started exhibiting paintings that she claimed reflected her knowledge of Aboriginal life. These works occupy an uncertain place between settler and Aboriginal imagery (Fig 1.21). Their ambiguous status is underscored by the way her paintings were displayed at Newspaper House Art Gallery in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{246} Burn, \textit{Dialogue}, 55-57; Smith, \textit{The Twentieth Century}, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{249} Gooding, \textit{Western Australian Art}, 75-77.
\end{footnotesize}
1953. They were shown as decoration for ‘a modern home,’ a common modernist use of tribal motifs, which in this case recognised a certain aesthetic quality in the Aboriginal motifs but not the status of fine art.

The art establishment was divided with regard to the value of Durack’s work. On one side, critic C.G. considered Durack a “gifted painter,” praising her power of expression. On the other side, Professor Edwards objected to her work being purchased for UWA’s contemporary art collection when it was recommended to the committee that managed the funds for art acquisitions. As seen in Section 3, Edwards relied on the advice of Laurie Thomas to select artworks for UWA’s collection. In the end, The Cord to Alcheringa (Fig 1.21), a ten panel series, was bought by UWA in 1953. Once again, the status of the work is unclear. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the panels were valued as anthropological or historical documents given the University’s request for a detailed description of the Aboriginal ceremonies depicted in them. There is no record of a similar request for a description or explanation of the scenes depicted in the twelve paintings purchased from Sidney Nolan in 1953.

Although some similarities can be discerned with the case of modernist painter Margaret Preston, who combined Aboriginal motifs with Western art conventions in search of a national style, Durack’s approach to Aboriginal motifs was quite different. She seems to have depicted, in her idiosyncratic style, a personal vision of Aboriginal life in the North of Western Australia.

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251 Ibid.
252 Edwards, oral history interview with Anne Reid, 16 March 1984, 26, transcript, UWA Archives.
253 Tom Collins Bequest Committee, minute of the meeting held on 13 November 1953, UWA Archives. John Barrett-Lennard had the panels examined by anthropologists when he was director of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (2001–2010). In their opinion the panels did not have much value as anthropological documents. John Barrett-Lennard, interview by author, Perth, 26 August 2013.
6. Conclusions

The description of the Perth art scene in 1953 illuminates a moment of transition when a new kind of art began to appear that showed awareness, engagement and interest in exploring the ideas and artistic practices developing elsewhere in Australia and in Europe, particularly Britain and France. In terms of Bourdieu’s model of the artistic field, the economic and cultural capital available in the post-war years created the conditions for the changes observed in Perth. The prosperity of the post-war period generated financial resources for the establishment of events such as the Festival of Perth, the recruitment of an art expert of the calibre of Laurie Thomas at AGWA, and the beginnings of a market that favoured the local variant of late modernism. Regarding cultural capital, the dislocations caused by World War II, combined with the buoyant economy, resulted in an influx of professionals and intellectuals with the competences needed to appreciate contemporary art produced outside Western Australia. By 1953, they were in a position to support the initiatives of the director of AGWA and the careers of the emerging modernists through the purchase of their work. Formal training in art is perhaps the area in which the importance of cultural capital was most evident. The three artists leading the changes examined in this chapter, Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor and Robert Juniper, trained in Britain in the early post-war period and were thus immersed in a rich art scene undergoing profound debates and transformations, which no doubt informed their art practice in ways not available to local artists who did not have this experience.

Up to the early 1950s, naturalistic landscapes (Figs 1.3, 1.5 and 1.12) represented the most appreciated art form among the Perth public. By 1953, however, a group of cultural producers interested in modernist art, particularly European modernist art, had gathered around AGWA and started to assert their influence on the emerging artistic field. They supported enthusiastically the new art (Figs 1.8, 1.13 and 1.18) brought to Perth by the local painters who trained in Britain in the post-war years when contemporary French painting was seen as a model of modernist practice. By this stage, the outback imagery that predominated in Australian modernism of the 1940s and 1950s had yet to gain a presence in Perth. But this situation was about to change, thanks to the efforts of the two most influential cultural institutions of the time, AGWA and UWA. They began to make this type of art available to the local public by purchasing some of the first examples for their collections in 1953.

The changes discussed in this chapter show how the Perth art scene was evolving into an autonomous artistic field. It was transitioning from a period when art appreciation depended on the criteria applied by a large undifferentiated public, who valued works of art mainly for their skilful representation of the natural environment. The new art that started to appear more frequently in
the 1950s appealed to a much more restricted public, a public of cultural producers familiar with modernist art and the specialised discourses that set the parameters to assess its value. For this restricted public, the subject represented was far less important than the innovative formal features of the work judged. One of the consequences of this change was going to be the neglect of local Aboriginal art which was seen as untouched by modernist ideals given that it continued to rely on the conventions of landscape and figurative art.

In Bourdieu’s analytical framework for the study of artistic production and consumption, public galleries and universities are fundamental for the functioning of an artistic field since both are important agents that produce discourses for the interpretation of art and, crucially, form consumers of art. In the case of Perth in 1953, we can appreciate the central role of AGWA and UWA in the transformation of a small art scene that did not even have a commercial sector. I discuss the effects of the establishment of commercial galleries and the expansion of the educational system in subsequent chapters.

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254 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 123.
CHAPTER TWO: Building a Modern City, 1962

The gradual opening to new ideas and practices, observed in the Perth art scene of 1953, continued in the 1960s, boosted by economic prosperity and a growing population. The dynamism of the city and its aspirations to project an image of modernity were most evident in the preparations for the Commonwealth Games, which Perth hosted in 1962. Chapter Two examines the expression of those aspirations in architecture, sculpture and painting. Its main subject is the development of local versions of modernism in all three art forms.

The chapter focuses, initially, on the buildings designed by the first generation of locally trained architects and their role in fostering the flourishing of sculpture in Perth. While modernism in public spaces - in architecture and sculpture - was embraced as a symbol of progress in the 1960s, modernist painting had a more complicated reception. In this respect, Perth was not that different to the rest of Australia. Terry Smith, who has argued that characterising local modernism is the most problematic subject of Australian art history, identifies the emergence of abstract painting in the late 1950s and in the 1960s, as a key moment that transformed Australian art.255 Chapter Two explores this moment of change by tracing the development of two key elements of the Perth art scene, art criticism and exhibition venues. I argue that they were instrumental for the recognition of the local version of late modernism as the most significant art produced in Perth in the 1960s. Section 4 outlines the experimental phase that led to the local variant of modernism and then concentrates on the reception of examples exhibited in 1962.

The final section of the chapter continues the historical narrative of Aboriginal art made in Perth. It places the emergence of a market for the regional scenery painted by Noongar artists in the context of the disjunction between the modernist art consumed by the minority of cultural producers and the preference for recognisable landscapes by the majority of the public.

1. Perth in 1962

In the early 1960s, Perth was at the beginning of a period of sustained economic expansion fuelled by mineral wealth after the decision of the Federal Government to lift the embargo on the export of iron ore in 1960 was followed by the announcement of the discovery of important deposits of this

255 Smith, The Twentieth Century, 12.
mineral in Western Australia in 1961. Adding to these economic prospects, Perth went through a building boom when the post-war prosperity allowed the city to mount its successful bid to host the 1962 Commonwealth Games. The awarding of the organisation of the Games was announced in 1958, sparking a huge increase in construction activity around the city.

![Fig 2.1 Painter Cedric Baxter working on a Commonwealth Games poster, Port of Fremantle Magazine, Spring 1962](image)

The large number of building projects completed in time for the inauguration of the VII British Empire and Commonwealth Games on 22 November 1962 was by far the main legacy of this event. Historian Jenny Gregory mentions some of these projects: the Narrows Bridge, the Serpentine Dam, a new passenger terminal for the port of Fremantle and at Perth Airport an improved terminal as well as the extension of the runway to enable the landing of jets. The construction boom provided opportunities for Perth architects to build in a modernist style that was to transform the city’s aspect. Significantly, architecture was not the only manifestation of the arts that benefited from both the Commonwealth Games and the building boom. Sculpture flourished for the first time in Perth when architects commissioned local artists to create sculptures that enhanced their projects. Furthermore, a wide range of exhibitions were organised to coincide with the Games. Appendix 2 contains a list of the exhibitions that took place in Perth in 1962.

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258 Gregory, City of Light, 77.
259 Ibid., 79.
2. Modern Aspirations: Architecture and Sculpture

The preparations for the Commonwealth Games unmistakably showed that the city wanted to project an image of modernity to the world. Fortunately, the first generation of locally trained architects started their professional practice around the time when the building boom was gaining momentum. The Diploma of Architecture, the first formal course in architecture in Western Australia, commenced at the School of Architecture of Perth Technical College in 1946 and the first graduates registered as architects in 1950. According to architectural historian Geoffrey London, the School of Architecture of Perth Technical College “promoted links to a British version of Modernism.”

Moreover, its graduates were encouraged to seek work experience overseas, especially in England. On their return to Perth, from the mid-1950s, they were well equipped to develop a local version of the British models they had seen at first hand. Just as the recent trends in painting were most influential in Perth through the British training of local artists, the new architectural forms of the 1960s also developed as an adaptation of modernism via Great Britain.

Two major variants of modernist architecture favoured by young Perth architects in the 1960s, Brutalism and the International Style, defined the characteristics of many of the buildings completed in the early 1960s. Although Brutalism originated in continental Europe, the style became so popular among British avant-garde architects in the 1950s that the term was coined in Britain. The association of Brutalism with simplicity, functionality and energy could have made it a particularly apt choice to express the ideals of modernity and progress of a relatively young city, experiencing accelerated growth. A striking early example of Brutalist architecture in Perth is the Hale School Memorial Hall (Fig 2.2). Although not completed in time for the Commonwealth Games, the new Council House (Fig 2.3), with its extensive use of glass in the external walls, is typical of the International Style appearing in Perth in the 1960s. According to Gregory, this example of high-rise

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260 The availability of well-trained architects when they were most needed in the late 1950s was not a matter of luck. Starting in 1944, much planning went into establishing the course that would deliver professionals able to take charge of the building activity expected to accompany the post-war economic revival. Erickson, Art and Design in Western Australia, 90.

261 Ibid., 90-91.


263 Ibid., 18.


265 The International Style developed in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s but the term comes from the title of a 1932 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. After World War II, the International Style became the predominant style of high-rise corporate buildings.
International Style was regarded as an emblem of the city’s modernity when it was opened in 1963.\textsuperscript{266}

Fig 2.2 Hale School Memorial Hall, 1961, corner Hale Road and Unwin Avenue, Wembley, architects: R. J. Ferguson in association with Anthony Brand and Marshall Clifton

Fig 2.3 Council House, 1963, 27-29 St George’s Terrace, Perth, architects: Jeffrey Howlett and Don Bailey

In Chapter One, I discussed the early career of Howard Taylor as a painter. Today, though, he is also recognised for his successful career as sculptor, which had its beginnings amidst the building boom of the 1960s. The new passenger terminal at Fremantle was the setting for Taylor’s first major public commission. Built in two stages, the terminal was designed by architectural firm Hobbs, Winning and Leighton in the International Style: a simple, functional building, mostly unadorned with open spaces and large areas of glass.\textsuperscript{267} Taylor worked on the project for three years solving the technical problems posed by the spaces he was assigned.\textsuperscript{268} One of his solutions involved carving and painting wooden panels with wildflowers, placed in a way that resembled a mural (Figs 2.4 and 2.5). Another

\textsuperscript{266} Gregory, City of Light, 110-111.
\textsuperscript{267} Fremantle Ports, Fremantle Passenger Terminal: 50 Years (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Ports, 2010), 6.
\textsuperscript{268} Snell, Howard Taylor, 66-67.
mural arrangement required painting directly on zinc-coated steel sections. In total he completed four multi-panel works by the time the Terminal was opened in 1962.  

Fig 2.4 Howard Taylor, The Fremantle Passenger Murals (Wildflowers), detail, 1960, oil on wood, 210 x 1426.5 x 12 cm, Fremantle Port Authority

Fig 2.5 Contemporary artist’s impression of the Fremantle Passenger Terminal, n.d., showing the location of Wildflowers by Howard Taylor

Academic Ted Snell believes this commission had lasting effects on Taylor’s practice as a sculptor for it gave him the opportunity to experiment with a variety of media and to tackle the technical problems of installing large scale works in public spaces. Curator Gary Dufour has remarked that over the twenty years following the Fremantle commission, Taylor increasingly devoted his time to public commissions in an effort to engage with a broad non-specialist audience.

269 The themes of Taylor’s works at Fremantle Passenger Terminal were Wildflowers (1960), Birds (1960), Trees (1962) and Fauna (1962).
270 Fremantle Ports, Fremantle Passenger Terminal, 7.
271 Snell, Howard Taylor, 67.
272 Dufour, Howard Taylor: Phenomena, 44. This commitment explains, to a large extent, the decline observed in the number of Taylor’s solo exhibitions during the same period.
Scottish-trained Margaret Priest pioneered modernist sculpture when she installed one of the first abstract sculptures, *Flame* (Fig 2.6), in a public place in Perth. Her early career also benefited from the extraordinary building activity of the 1960s. She completed an important commission for the new Trinity College Chapel in East Perth in 1962. Architect James Thompson designed the chapel as a circular, plain building with exposed-brick walls and stained glass windows as its only decoration (Fig 2.7).\(^{273}\)

The College’s Headmaster, Br J. A. Kelly, commissioned statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Crucifix and the fourteen Stations of the Cross for the chapel specifying that he wanted works that would harmonise with its modernist aesthetic.\(^{274}\) Priest, the best-known sculptor working in Perth at the time, certainly had the skills to comply with this brief. She fashioned simple, geometric pieces in white plaster that form a graceful design on the walls of the circular building.

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The simplicity of the pieces not only shares in the austere aesthetic of the building, it also makes them easily readable, an important feature in the liturgical context where they are placed.

Fig 2.8 Margaret Priest, Stations of the Cross (detail), 1962, plaster, approximately 100 x 80 x 30 cm each, Trinity College Chapel, photograph by Eva Fernandez

The achievements of Priest and Taylor as innovative artists must be seen in relation to developments in Australian sculpture. Author and curator Graeme Sturgeon opens his book Contemporary Australian Sculpture with the exhibition Mildara Prize for Sculpture held at Mildura in 1961, enshrining this as the year that inaugurated contemporary Australian sculpture. As for what came before 1961, Sturgeon’s opinion was rather circumspect. He summarised it like this:

Australian sculpture, like marriage, has to be taken as it is, for better or for worse, and in the course of preparing this book and looking at a great many examples I often had the feeling that the case tended towards the worse. In an ideal situation many of the works inspected would, one hopes, not have happened at all.

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275 O’Brien, Margaret Priest, 84-85. O’Brien dates these works to 1964, but the column ‘Art’ in The West Australian reported the opening of the chapel, with comments on the sculptures, on 17 February 1962.

276 The photographs by Eva Fernandez reproduced in Figs 2.8 and 2.9 appear in O’Brien, Margaret Priest, 87.


278 Sturgeon, The Development of Australian Sculpture, 10.
Seen in this light, the commissions completed by Priest and Taylor in 1962 can be considered examples of cutting-edge contemporary Australian sculpture, particularly Priest’s works. At this stage, however, sculpture did not receive much attention in Western Australia or in Australia for that matter. In Sturgeon’s opinion, sculpture had been accorded second-class treatment in Australia up to the 1970s.\textsuperscript{279} In Perth, the expanding art scene counted a number of critics by 1962, as will be discussed in the next section, yet the sculptures made by Priest and Taylor received only passing comments in the daily press, with the first publication dedicated to local sculpture not appearing until 1991.\textsuperscript{280} Nevertheless, despite the scant critical attention, sculpture continued to evolve as an experimental and innovative local practice. One of the reasons behind its achievements might be the auspicious circumstances surrounding the emergence of sculptural practice in the Perth of the 1960s when in contrast to painting, there were hardly any examples of a local or a national tradition to which the work of emerging sculptors could be compared. Moreover, as the commissions completed by Priest and Taylor show, sculptures were required to look innovative and progressive since they were expected to enhance buildings that embodied the ideals of modernity embraced in the early 1960s.

At a time when the city was living through a period of marked prosperity and rapid growth, the streamlining of the built environment can be interpreted as a response to the needs and aspirations brought about by new and more affluent ways of living. These conditions also favoured the appearance of new elements of the artistic field such as criticism and commercial galleries.

### 3. The Expanding Perth Art Scene in 1962

The lack of varied art criticism and the absence of commercial galleries were among the most important factors hindering the development of the small Perth art scene of 1953. Both limitations had been overcome, to a degree, by 1962. In the improved conditions, the number of exhibitions more than doubled reaching seventy eight compared to thirty three in 1953 (Appendices 1 and 2). Important as the increase in numbers was, this section examines qualitative changes that I would argue played an essential part in determining the type of art produced and consumed in Perth in the 1960s.

\textsuperscript{279} Ibid., 8.

### 3.1 Criticism

One of the most substantial changes in the Perth art scene, with respect to 1953, was the increase in both the number of critics and the quality of their writings. Whereas there was only one art critic in town in 1953, C. G. Hamilton writing for *The West Australian*, by 1962 this newspaper had two regular critics and *The Sunday Times* had recruited practising artist Ernest Philpot to fill a similar role. But the decisive transformation occurred when art criticism appeared in the pages of the journals *Westerly* and *The Critic*, both published by staff affiliated to UWA. Their regular contributors included academics George Seddon, Allan Edwards, Patrick Hutchings and Tom Gibbons. Drs Salek Minc and Roy Constable, two respected art collectors, also wrote regularly for *The Critic*.

The new criticism marked a clear break with the conditions prevailing in the 1950s, when writing on art appeared only in the daily press. The criticism published in *Westerly* and *The Critic* represented a major step in the direction of establishing the autonomy of the artistic field as it did not address the general public, instead it was intended for a restricted public who was familiar, or at least was willing to become familiar, with specialised art discourses. This kind of criticism refers to a particular area of cultural production, the production of fine art, subject to its own rules and logic which are accessible only to those equipped with specific cultural competences.  

An example of how the UWA journals defined what constituted fine art in Perth in the early 1960s can be found in the special issue of *Westerly* published in November 1962. Five articles grouped under the heading ‘Art and Architecture’ discussed aspects of sculpture, painting and architecture in Western Australia. These articles provided a summary of local art production and identified the leading artists of the day, according to the criteria of the academics who wrote for *Westerly*. For philosopher Patrick Hutchings, author of the main article, the illustrations accompanying his essay showed “the breadth and variety of artistic activity in the West.” The works reproduced, he claimed, exemplified a “process of cross-fertilisation,” combining the local with influences from remote places to open a view towards a larger world. The twelve exemplary artists selected by Hutchings were Margaret Priest (Fig 2.6), Guy Grey-Smith (Fig 2.10), Robert Juniper (Fig 2.11), Brian McKay (Fig 2.12), Tom Gibbons, Kathleen O’Connor, Geoffrey Allen, Cyril Lander, Ernest Philpot, Elizabeth Durack, Rhoda Boissevain, William Boissevain and Helen Grey-Smith.

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283 Ibid.
Fig 2.10 Guy Grey-Smith, Torbay, 1957, oil on hardboard, 69.5 x 92 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, exhibited: *Australian Painting: Colonial-Impressionist-Contemporary*, WAAG, 1962, cat. 123

Fig 2.11 Robert Juniper, Landscape Merredin, 1962, oil on plywood, 76.5 x 100.5 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, exhibited: *Robert Juniper and Thomas Gleghorn*, Skinner Galleries, 1962

Fig 2.12 Brian McKay, Moondine Hill, 1962, oil on hardboard, 90.1 x 107 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA
The first issue of the other art journal published at UWA, *The Critic*, appeared in January 1961 and its editorial opened with the assertion: “Perth has always been a poor relation in the field of criticism.” It added: “The result is that we have a good deal of artistic activity with very inadequate means of assessing its significance.” *The Critic* made it its mission to remedy this state of affairs and even though the quality of the criticism it published was variable, it nevertheless offered timely evaluation of current events thus promoting the growth of an informed audience for the arts. Patrick Hutchings and Tom Gibbons wrote most of the reviews concerning the visual arts. They contributed to the development of the Perth art scene by assessing and interpreting locally-produced work in light of contemporary art discourses. Historian Jenny Mills has noted how radical this approach to criticism seemed in the early 1960s in Perth, where many still deferred to the authority of Roger Fry:

> Two newly arrived academics at this university [UWA], English lecturer and painter Tom Gibbons and philosopher Patrick Hutchings, backed by art patron Dr Salek Minc, were keen to investigate new European and North American art concepts. Modernism now went far beyond the theories of Roger Fry, Clive Bell and Iain Macnab.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, symbolic meanings are an integral part of the cultural goods known as works of art. Given that these meanings are generated largely by critics, academics and curators, it is crucial that their opinions be recorded and disseminated. This is what *Westerly* and particularly *The Critic* achieved. Art criticism in these publications validated modernist local art as a legitimate object of academic study and proposed a hierarchy of artists, placing at its top those who adapted a form of stylised abstraction to evoke the local environment. I come back to this subject in Section 4 where I discuss the reception of art exhibited in 1962.

As important as the criticism of the 1960s has been for the way we see art of that period today, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent it affected contemporaneous art practice. On the one hand, according to authors Christine Sharkey and Pat Duffy, the philosophical and theoretical concerns of the academics and critics of the time were largely ignored by artists. On the other, the critics’ reservations with respect to pure abstraction, particularly Abstract Expressionism, might have been harder to ignore. Hutchings was concerned with the quality of abstract paintings in the absence of

285 Ibid.
clear criteria for their assessment. Gibbons questioned to what extent abstraction, by becoming the new orthodoxy, was an obstacle for the appreciation of diversity in art. Art patrons Salek Minc and Roy Constable added their voices to the chorus. For Minc, the originality of non-objective painting had been exhausted and he was not convinced that there was much potential left in it. Constable condemned those “painters who, over the last decade, have daubed and splashed, dripped and dribbled, without real purposeful brushstrokes or a controlled technique.” Tellingly, for Constable the key was “a satisfying balance between the reconstruction of nature and the abstract concern of pure form.”

There is not enough evidence to establish how close the arts community in Perth was following the battle between figurative and abstract artists raging on the other side of the country, but Constable’s statement sounds as a middle-ground compromise between the two positions. His statement is also consistent with the views of a number of British critics in the 1950s, who sought the *juste milieu* or middle ground for contemporary art practice. They advocated for mediations between imagination and fidelity to the subject, between modernism and tradition and between advanced art and majority taste. Arguably, the ambivalent attitude of the local critics towards pure abstraction and the preference among art patrons for ‘balanced’ rather than radical art had an effect on the tamed version of late modernism, based on the landscape (Figs 2.11 and 2.12), which emerged in Perth in the late 1950s and would continue to develop until the end of the century.

### 3.2 Exhibition Venues

As discussed in Chapter One, the absence of commercial galleries was a major factor restricting the growth of the Perth art scene. By 1962, conditions had improved with three galleries operating in the city, the Skinner Galleries, the Claude Hotchin Art Gallery and the Hovea Art Gallery. Besides these venues, other spaces provided opportunities for exhibitions such as the showroom of designer David Foulkes Taylor and the foyer of the Patch Theatre (Appendix 2). Together with the emergence of varied art criticism, the new commercial galleries represented a substantial

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293 Ibid.
294 The *Antipodean Exhibition*, Melbourne 1959, and its accompanying Manifesto marked the start of the most visible phase of the controversy between the supporters of figurative and abstract art in Australia.
296 The Patch Theatre was located at 267 William Street in the Perth Central Business District.
improvement in Perth’s cultural infrastructure that was to have long term effects on the production and consumption of art.

Although not exactly an art gallery, the first of these new venues to appear in Perth was the showroom of furniture designer David Foulkes Taylor who trained as an industrial designer at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London from 1948 to 1953.297 The Central School was at the forefront of the evolving trends in British art in the 1950s, when it had close ties with the Institute of Contemporary Art and the Independent Group.298 Based on Bauhaus principles, the design courses of the Central School were particularly influential at the time.299 Foulkes Taylor was thus formed in an environment that privileged the early-modernist aesthetic of the Bauhaus and encouraged innovation.

Back in Perth, the designer opened a showroom in the vicinity of UWA in 1957.300 These premises soon became a meeting place for the modernist artists who started to gain recognition in the 1950s, for the group of patrons who wanted to see this type of art in their locality and for the UWA academics who wrote about the visual arts.301 Bourdieu’s analysis of cultural production characterises the artistic field as a field of interactions between the agents that participate in the production of art. In his view, these interactions are at the origin of the changes observed in art production. Seen in this light, Foulkes Taylor’s design business was crucial for the development of the local art scene as it provided a setting where some of its most critically and financially influential members gathered precisely to see recent trends in art and exchange views about them. It is not unconceivable that in the course of these exchanges artists learned what patrons and critics expected, or would have liked, to find in their work.

Foulkes Taylor’s business also had an effect on the consumption of art. He contributed to the education of a generation of Perth consumers who were exposed to his own designs and to the most up-to-date furnishings by designers from Scandinavia, Italy and the USA.302 In this innovative

298 Garlake, New Art New World, 30; Harrison, Transition, 94-98. The Independent Group represented the radical side of British art. It counted among its members, artists and critics whose interest in mass culture and advertising techniques led to Pop Art.
299 Garlake, New Art New World, 30.
300 Foulkes Taylor returned to Perth in 1954 and worked first as furniture designer for Aherns Department Store. His first showroom was located at 2 Crawley Ave, Nedlands. Duffy, The Foulkes Taylor Years, 16; Winston Foulkes Taylor, interview by author, Perth, 23 September 2013.
302 Bell, memorandum on the didactic text panel for the exhibition New Design in Perth 1955-1965.
environment, Foulkes Taylor showed locally-made modernist paintings and crafts, thus not only identifying contemporary international design as the proper context for their appreciation but also suggesting their association with exclusive taste. Additionally, visitors to his showroom were able to browse the latest issues of overseas art and design magazines such as *Studio International* and *Domus*.\(^\text{303}\) This was an important resource for those wishing to keep informed of recent trends in an era when international art publications were expensive and not easy to come by.

Foulkes Taylor displayed work by artists who shared his views on art, for example Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper, but his showroom was not a commercial gallery in the sense that he did not promote or represent these artists.\(^\text{304}\) Reportedly, the sales of paintings were incidental to his main line of business as furniture designer.\(^\text{305}\) Artists hung their paintings, for instance, in the garage at the back of the showroom and left them there, sometimes for extended periods.\(^\text{306}\) This space became the Triangle Gallery in 1963 when it opened, officially, with an exhibition by Tom Gibbons.\(^\text{307}\)

So by the end of 1957, Perth had a place where contemporary art with a modernist outlook could be appreciated and acquired but, as was the case in many Australian cities, no entrepreneur was dedicated to its promotion. Rose Skinner filled this void with the opening of the Skinner Galleries. In Bourdieu’s framework for the analysis of cultural production, art traders are instrumental for the functioning and growth of an art market. Their prestige and cultural capital guarantees the quality of the art they sell, while their promotional activities contribute to establish the reputation of the artists they represent.\(^\text{308}\) Rose Skinner was a capable art dealer recognised, at a national level, for her expertise in contemporary art and known for the energy she put into the promotional activities of her gallery.\(^\text{309}\) Financed by Joe Skinner, Rose’s husband, the Skinner Galleries opened on 14 October 1958. This was the first purpose-built gallery in Perth (Fig 2.13).

The interest of the Skinners in modernist art has been documented and the substantial collection they bequeathed to UWA proves it.\(^\text{310}\) According to Allan Edwards, the Skinners had already bought

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\(^\text{304}\) Duffy, *The Foulkes Taylor Years*, 12.

\(^\text{305}\) Winston Foulkes-Taylor, interview by author, Perth, 23 September 2013.


\(^\text{308}\) Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 77-78.


\(^\text{310}\) Sharkey, “Rose Skinner,” 373.
paintings by Sali Herman and Russell Drysdale by the early 1950s. Hence, they were among the earliest local collectors of Australian modernist art. At a time when not many were familiar with this type of painting in Perth, Rose and Joe Skinner became aware of it during the period they resided in Melbourne after marrying in 1946. The influential gallerist was another member of the Perth art scene who preferred abstracted landscapes to purely abstract paintings. Perhaps, nowhere is this preference more visible than in the ten landscapes by Fred Williams included in the Skinner Bequest to UWA.

Rose Skinner was a shrewd business woman who started to promote her gallery when it was still under construction. She wrote to all State Gallery Directors in Australia, to directors of Australian commercial galleries and to some private galleries and art critics in Britain. She presented her project as an ‘altruistic venture’ and requested advice and cooperation to organise future exhibitions. The advice she received from Hal Missingham, Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales; Eric Westbrook, Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, and John Russell, art critic for the London Sunday Times, coincided on one point: it was going to be very difficult to convince artists who were selling well locally to take the risk of sending work to Perth, due to the long time and high costs involved. But she was not easily deterred. Despite the problems encountered, Skinner had the skills to establish a network of connections with public and commercial galleries. The Macquarie Galleries in Sydney and the Australian Galleries in Melbourne are examples of

311 Allan Edwards, introduction to The Joe and Rose Skinner Bequest, by Undercroft Art Gallery (Crawley, W.A.: Undercroft Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, 1982), n.p., exhibition catalogue, AGWA Research Library
312 Sharkey, “Rose Skinner,” 373.
314 Barrett-Lennard, A Partial View, 133.
316 Ibid., 380-381.
galleries which supported her projects.\textsuperscript{317} By managing carefully her commercial relations, Skinner maintained a constant stream of exhibitions by artists from the east of Australia between 1958 and 1975.\textsuperscript{318}

Even though Skinner’s plans for exhibitions from overseas did not come to fruition, Perth artists and the public benefited greatly from the opportunity to regularly see the work of leading contemporary Australian artists. Perhaps the single most important contribution of the Skinner Galleries to the development of the visual arts in Perth was its key role in facilitating the flow of contemporary art from the east of the country. This represented a vast improvement over the conditions in the early 1950s when, as discussed in Chapter One, very limited information on Australian recent art reached Perth. By 1962, the Skinner Galleries had established its reputation as the most important venue for contemporary art in Perth thanks to its effective promotion of well-established artists, local and from the rest of Australia (Fig 2.14).

![Fig 2.14 Sidney Nolan and the Duke of Edinburgh at the opening of Nolan’s exhibition at Skinner Galleries, 22 November 1962](image)

In the public sector of the art scene there were improvements too although on a more modest scale than those observed in the commercial galleries. In 1962, the State Gallery not only had a new name, Western Australian Art Gallery (WAAG), it had also become a more active institution holding sixteen exhibitions compared to the four of 1953. The name changed when WAAG separated from the Western Australian Museum to become an independent entity in 1959.\textsuperscript{319} Under director Frank

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{317} Ibid., 381.
  \item \textsuperscript{318} Perth being a transit port for Australian artists travelling to and from London made it somewhat easier for Skinner to convince them to stop off for a show at her gallery. Australian artists, not based in Perth, who exhibited at the Skinner Galleries between 1958 and 1975 included: Sidney Nolan, Arthur Boyd, Margo Lewers, Sali Herman, Ray Crooke, Clifton Pugh, Albert Tucker, Fred Williams, Thomas Gleghorn, Robert Dickerson, Jacqueline Hick, Judy Cassab, Elwyn Lynn, John Passmore, John Perceval, Margaret Olley, Donald Friend, Henri Bastin and Noel Counihan. Sharkey, “Rose Skinner,” 381.
  \item \textsuperscript{319} The Art Gallery Act 1959 separated the Art Gallery from the Museum of Western Australia, giving control of the Gallery to a Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor of Western Australia.
\end{itemize}
Norton, appointed in 1958, WAAG’s focus shifted decidedly towards modernist art. The shift was most evident in the acquisitions for the State Art Collection that in 1962 included examples of local modernist painting by Allan Baker, Guy Grey-Smith, Robert Juniper (Fig 2.11), Brian McKay (Fig 2.12), Frank Norton and Ernest Philpot. Examples of modernism in the eastern states ranged from the 1938 The Street Singer by William Dobell to the 1962 Leda and the Swan by Sidney Nolan, while four abstract paintings by William Scott illustrated late modernism in Britain.

4. The Artists and the Exhibitions

In this section, I consider four of the most important exhibitions of 1962 to highlight how late modernism became the dominant trend in local art production. I discuss first two exhibitions staged at the premier space for contemporary art, the Skinner Galleries, featuring the work of Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper. Their paintings are emblematic of the Perth variant of late modernism characterised by the adoption of forms of gestural, as opposed to geometric, abstraction to create stylised images of the natural environment. By focusing on the Annual Exhibition of the Perth Society of Artists, I outline then the critical reception of art that did not conform to the late-modernist aesthetic. I close the section by examining the reactions to Australian Painting: Colonial-Impressionist-Contemporary, the largest and most visited exhibition of 1962.

Even though the formal characteristics of the art produced in Perth in the early 1960s are similar to those of late modernist art as it appeared in Europe and North America, the local painters fashioned their version of modernism not only by engaging in a sustained exploration of the formal elements of their medium but also by meeting the expectations of the local patrons and critics, who as we have seen favoured the landscape genre. This is reflected in a practice that follows the general pattern observed by Ian Burn in Australian modernism. For Burn, “the landscape has been the vehicle whereby modernist practice has achieved a local meaning, inspiring the vernacular forms in which modernism has been practised in Australia.”

The mature version of Perth modernism was clearly discernible in the exhibition Guy and Helen Grey-Smith held at Skinner Galleries and reviewed by Patrick Hutchings for The Critic. In a generally positive review, Hutchings reserved his highest commendations for the landscape-based works. He wrote: “The most exciting and fruitful developments seem to be in the abstract-landscape pictures,

321 Ibid.
322 Burn, National Life & Landscapes, 9.
with their elegant and confident designs." An example of the admired landscapes is *South of Roebourne* (Fig 2.15)

*South of Roebourne* is representative of the direction Grey-Smith’s art had taken in the early 1960s. He was by then mastering the lessons of Nicolas de Staël, particularly those seen in his paintings with irregular slabs of colour rendered in thick impasto. Grey-Smith’s stay in London in 1953-1954 coincided with the moment when many British artists and critics identified de Staël as the most promising representative of the School of Paris, a model of modernism that combined representation and abstraction, thus satisfying the taste of those who wanted something new but not revolutionary. Back in Perth, Grey-Smith continued his explorations of both the local landscape and de Staël’s examples with results visible in his 1962 exhibition. As Grey-Smith’s biographer, Andrew Gaynor, has remarked: “1962 may be considered the year that Guy’s influences truly amalgamated.”

To appreciate the changes in the painter’s style, it might be helpful to compare *South of Roebourne* (Fig 2.15) and *Torbay* (Fig 2.10), created four years earlier. In both cases the point of departure is a landscape and the colours are equally vibrant, even in a similar tonal range. But this is where the similarities end. The 1957 landscape, for all its underlying geometric structure, aims at capturing the atmosphere of a recognisable place, whereas in the 1961 picture, the interest centres on the rich

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texture of the surface and on the subtly-balanced elements of the composition. The latter is not a
depiction, but an evocation, a reimagining of a place. These changes occurred during the
experimental years of the Perth Group.

A few weeks before the opening of the Skinner Galleries, Grey-Smith invited painters Robert Juniper
and Brian McKay to form a group of like-minded artists, keen on experimenting with abstract or non-
representational art. This was the origin of the Perth Group, the first artist collective expressly
created to experiment with abstract art in Western Australia. At the function marking the opening of
the Skinner Galleries, Grey-Smith recruited painter, academic and critic Tom Gibbons as the Group’s
fourth permanent member. It was not a coincidence that the Perth Group and the Skinner
Galleries were born on the same day. Both parties were trying to establish their reputation as the
local representatives of the cutting edge of contemporary art. According to Juniper, Grey-Smith had
in mind a collective similar to the Sydney Group, which was known then for its membership of non-
figurative painters. Reportedly, Grey-Smith considered that Sydney artists were well organised
and launching themselves publicly as practitioners of abstraction, while nothing was happening in
Perth.

The members of the Perth Group met occasionally and organised three annual exhibitions, but did
not share a platform, program or philosophy. Their conversations were limited chiefly to the
technical aspects of the craft of painting. Interviewed in 1987, Gibbons could not remember a
single theoretical discussion of the Group’s artistic aims. The closest they came to expressing their
goals, publicly, was in the column Art in The West Australian where the announcement of the
Group’s second exhibition was accompanied by the invitation: “This group invites artists with similar
aims - non-objective - to exhibit with it.” Each member of the Group experimented with non-
representational styles independently of the others. Grey-Smith persisted with his exploration of
School of Paris abstraction, while Juniper and McKay were interested in Abstract Expressionism.

Interviewed by Christine Sharkey, Juniper referred in particular to William de Kooning and McKay to

326 Ibid., 53-55.
327 Ibid., 55.
328 Christine Sharkey, “An Investigation of the Conditions of Practice,” 176; Smith, Australian Painting, 275, 306
and 308. The members of the Sydney Group, started by neo-romantic painters in 1945, moved gradually
towards abstraction and by 1957 they were mostly non-figurative painters.
330 Sharkey, “An Investigation of the Conditions of Practice,” 177; McNamara, Time + Machine, 13. The most
extensive research on the Perth Group was conducted by Christine Sharkey. In 1986 and 1987, she interviewed
Robert Juniper, Brian McKay and Tom Gibbons on the goals and functioning of this group.
Jackson Pollock among the sources that inspired their experiments with abstraction.\textsuperscript{333} Seemingly by 1962, the Perth avant-garde was turning its attention towards New York and neither Juniper nor McKay seems to have mentioned any of the many practitioners of the British version of Abstract Expressionism.

The Perth Group held commercially and critically successful exhibitions at the Skinner Galleries in 1959, 1960 and 1961.\textsuperscript{334} The last one was reviewed by Patrick Hutchings in the then newly launched journal \textit{The Critic}. Grey-Smith’s \textit{Horseshoe Range} (Fig 2.16) caught the attention of Hutchings, who identified the context for its assessment when he described it as the transformation of “a piece of landscape into an abstract expressionist image.”\textsuperscript{335} \textit{Horseshoe Range} can be seen as an intermediary step in Grey-Smith’s experiments towards the more resolved images he exhibited in 1962. The brilliant palette, the arrangement of the suggested masses and the expressive brushwork combine in a balanced and appealing composition that still represents a recognisable place, yet the textured surface and the blocks of colour prefigure a work such as \textit{South of Roebourne} (Fig 2.15). \textit{Horseshoe Range} is an example of the form of late modernism that flourished in Perth in the early 1960s. Its near contemporary, Juniper’s \textit{Desert Edge} (Fig 2.17) is another example to which Hutching’s description, quoted above, can be appropriately applied. A comparison of \textit{Desert Edge} with the more geometrically structured \textit{Glass House} (Fig 2.18) gives an idea of the range of experimentation carried on by Juniper during the Perth Group years.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{333}Sharkey, “An Investigation of the Conditions of Practice,” 194 and 213.
\item \textsuperscript{334}Gaynor, \textit{Guy Grey-Smith}, 55; Sharkey, “An Investigation of the Conditions of Practice,” 178-179. The exhibitions of the Perth Group were so successful that after the third one, Rose Skinner cancelled the original agreement she had reached with Grey-Smith, whereby the Group rented space only at Skinner Galleries with no commissions paid.
\item \textsuperscript{335}Patrick Hutchings, “The Perth Group,” \textit{The Critic} 1, no. 11 (1961): 63.
\end{itemize}
Notwithstanding Grey-Smith’s declared intentions to form a group of artists dedicated to non-objective painting, the experiments of the Perth Group in this direction did not last long. By 1962, they had settled into a pattern of highly stylised and abstracted representations of the local landscape. After a period of experimentation, landscape had again reasserted itself, becoming the dominant motif for most of the leading Perth artists. In light of Bourdieu’s analytical framework that considers the consumption of art an essential element in the dynamics of the artistic field, I would suggest that this phenomenon was related to the preferences of the local consumers of art as expressed in the writings of critics and patrons in the 1960s. I must emphasise that in Bourdieu’s formulation the artistic field is a field of restricted production, and therefore I am referring here to the preferences of art consumers who were at the same time cultural producers and not to the preferences of the general public who continued to admire naturalistic landscapes.

336 Before the 1960s, the term ‘non-objective art’ referred chiefly to the type of abstraction pioneered by painters Wassily Kandinsky and Kasimir Malevich. Being familiar with European modernism, Grey-Smith probably used the term in this sense. Later, the term became associated with simplified geometric art in the United States.
Another instance of how the preferences of the cultural producers were articulated can be found in Patrick Hutchings’ review of the exhibition Robert Juniper and Thomas Gleghorn also held at the Skinner Galleries. Hutchings expressed serious reservations regarding Juniper’s abstract paintings by asserting: “Juniper has tried for some time to toughen up his decorative style, and to produce strong abstract expressionist canvases” and then concluded: “none of the attempts in this present show really comes off.”337 The critic, however, proceeded to laud Juniper’s landscapes, just as he had done with Grey-Smith’s landscape paintings discussed above. Landscape Merredin (Fig 2.11) is an example of the landscapes on display at the Skinner Galleries. Hutchings did not mention Dancers on a Wall (Fig 2.19) which was also included in the exhibition he reviewed. Presumably, he counted it as one of Juniper’s attempts at abstraction that did not come off. Yet, it won the McKellar-Hall Prize in the Commonwealth Games Art Prize, a national competition judged by the director of the National Gallery of New South Wales, Hal Missingham.338

The critical reception of the 1962 Perth Society of Artists (PSA) exhibition underscores the attitudes towards contemporary painting that did not conform to the late-modernist aesthetic seen in the work of the Perth Group. This exhibition, which took place at Skinner Galleries, was summarily dismissed by Tom Gibbons in The Critic with the statement: “this is a thoroughly bad exhibition and that a good half of the paintings are not sufficiently competent to warrant public exhibition.”339 Gibbons rejected the work of the group of artists he called “the experimental majority” who, in his opinion, were “feebly repeating experiments conducted, long, long ago by Kandinsky and Moore.”340

337 Ibid.
340 Ibid.
It would seem that what Gibbons was condemning was the inability, or unwillingness, of many of the local artists to experiment with the most recent trends in art. For the critic, their modernism was frozen in time, its development stopped in the 1940s. This was the view that increasingly prevailed and coincided by 1962 with the PSA no longer being recognised as the most prestigious association of leading artists in Perth. 341

In terms of visitation and press coverage, Australian Painting: Colonial-Impressionist-Contemporary (Australian Painting) can be regarded as the most important exhibition hosted by WAAG in 1962. Organised by of the Australian Government at the request of the Tate Gallery, Australian Painting came to Perth before travelling to London where it was seen from January to March 1963. 342 This enormous exhibition, comprising more than two hundred paintings, initiated a major controversy at its first showing as part of the 1962 Adelaide Festival. The president of the Contemporary Art Society, painter Albert Tucker, led the attack by alleging that “it misrepresented Australian’s present painting ability by including too many historic and insignificant painters.” 343 Part of the furore might be explained by the expectations created by the earlier exhibition Recent Australian Painting, held at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 1961. Under the direction of Bryan Robertson, the Whitechapel Gallery became a leading centre for contemporary art in the 1950s and 1960s. 344 Robertson visited Australia in order to select work for an exhibition focusing on the most recent artistic trends. 345 In Western Australia, he chose paintings by Elizabeth Durack, Guy Grey-Smith, Robert Juniper (Figs 2.17 and 2.18) and John Lunghi. It was a huge accolade for these artists for although the exhibition was seen in London only, its success was reported back in Australia. 346

After the success of Recent Australian Painting, the first version of Australian Painting disappointed those who expected another exhibition of contemporary art, hence the discontent that greeted its showing in Adelaide. Taking the protests into consideration, the organisers shifted the emphasis towards contemporary art. More than two thirds of the paintings in the final version of Australian

341 Other artist collectives existed in Perth in the 1950s and 1960s such as the Studio Group of Six, the WA Society of Artists and the WA Women Painters and Applied Arts Society, but they were not as prestigious as the PSA nor did they exhibit at the exclusive Skinner Galleries.
344 Garlake, New Art New World, 14.
Painting were classified as contemporary but only two Western Australian artists were represented: Guy Grey-Smith (Figs 1.8 and 2.10) and Robert Juniper.\textsuperscript{347}

Despite the changes, or perhaps because of them, the exhibition provoked many irate responses in Perth where the public split into two clearly defined camps. On one side, cultural producers such as artist and critic Ernest Philpot, critic C. G. Hamilton and academics Allan Edwards and Tom Gibbons were enthusiastic in their reviews and found the exhibition representative of Australian art.\textsuperscript{348} On the other side, many members of the general public, who appreciated the colonial and impressionist landscapes, expressed profound dissatisfaction with the large number of contemporary works and questioned the skills of the painters by describing their works as daubs or as incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{349} These disparate reactions point to the degree of autonomy achieved by the artistic field in Perth by 1962. While Australian modernism was scorned by the majority of the local public, it was appreciated by critics, academics and by the patrons of the premier space for contemporary art, the Skinner Galleries. By this stage, in stark contrast to 1953, Australian modernists had a market in Perth, albeit a small one, confined as it was mostly to the elite clientele that frequented the Skinner Galleries. The criteria this select group applied to assess and rank the quality of the art they consumed had little in common with the preferences of the general public.

5. Aboriginal Art and Artists

Not much Aboriginal art was seen in the galleries of Perth in 1962. The only documented exhibition of this kind of art was a display of bark paintings from WAAG’s collection, organised to coincide with the Commonwealth Games.\textsuperscript{350} Given that at this stage the few bark paintings in the State Art Collection came from Arnhem Land, it would appear that no exhibition of local Aboriginal art was recorded in 1962.\textsuperscript{351} Yet, the production of bark paintings by Aboriginal artists residing in Perth has continued to grow in popularity and recognition.\textsuperscript{352}

\textsuperscript{347} Juniper was represented in the Tate exhibition by Street of Leaves (1958) and Cosmic Garden (1961) and Grey-Smith by Still Life, Chrysanthemums (1953); Torbay (1957) and Red Hills (1960). John Perceval, born in Western Australia, was also represented in this exhibition. However, he is recognised as a Melbourne artist.


\textsuperscript{349} The angry reaction of the Perth public to Australian Painting is documented in an extraordinary number of letters sent to the Editor of The West Australian. Too numerous to cite, they fill several pages of the file of newspaper clippings at AGWA’s Research Library. The letters started on 29 September and did not stop until the show closed on 24 October 1962.

\textsuperscript{350} “Exhibitions,” The Western Australian Art Gallery Bulletin 1, no.5 (1963): 47.

\textsuperscript{351} The first bark paintings to enter the State Art Collection were a gift from anthropologist Charles Mountford in 1952. Later in the decade, the Commonwealth Government presented AGWA with more bark paintings collected by Mountford in Arnhem Land. Brenda L Croft and Art Gallery of Western Australia, Indigenous Art: Art Gallery of Western Australia (Perth, W.A.: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2001), 7.
been well documented. They were made in Allawah Grove, an Aboriginal Settlement situated in South Guilford where displaced Noongar people were living by 1962. There are parallels between Carrolup Native Settlement and the Settlement in South Guilford since both had their origins in assimilation policies. As discussed in Chapter One, in the 1940s Aboriginal children were interned in Carrolup, and other isolated settlements, to be instructed in the way of life of the Australian settlers. By the 1960s, the State Government was encouraging the migration of Aboriginal families into metropolitan areas as a way of furthering cultural assimilation. Allawah Grove was managed by the Department of Native Welfare as an intermediary step in this process.\(^\text{352}\) As a form of part-time employment and supplementary income, classes on how to make paperbark paintings commenced at Allawah Grove in 1962 (Fig 2.20).\(^\text{353}\) By the end of the year, *The West Australian* was reporting that the paintings sold so well, locally and overseas, that there were not enough examples to satisfy the demand from visitors attending the Commonwealth Games.\(^\text{354}\) Allawah Grove, just like Carrolup before, closed in 1968 and there is no evidence of further support for this group of urban Noongar artists.\(^\text{355}\)

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\(^\text{353}\) “Sketches on Bark Sell Well,” *West Australian*, 1 November 1962.

\(^\text{354}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{355}\) Walley and Pushman, *On the Outskirts*, 60.
on an exhibition of Noongar landscapes held at the Dulux Colour Centre in 1960. By then the organiser of the exhibition, Doreen Trainor, had been visiting Aboriginal artists in prison and selling their works for five years.

WAAG director Frank Norton and critic C.G. Hamilton selected the works for the Dulux Colour Centre exhibition. The modest catalogue printed for the occasion lists twenty-one works created by eight artists among them Revel Cooper, Reynold Hart, Malcolm Ellis and Bella Kelly. Revel Cooper is the best known of these Noongar artists and even though he knew some success as a painter in Western Australia and in Victoria, he was to spend the rest of his life in and out of prison. In his exhibition review, C. G. Hamilton praised the strong and bold style of Cooper, especially in those paintings that he described as his large works. The catalogue did not record the dimensions of the paintings on display, but the comment by Hamilton indicates that Cooper was producing large works at least from the beginning of the 1960s. South-West Landscape near Pemberton (Fig 2.21), painted around 1962, is a striking image that can certainly be considered large by the standards of the time in Perth. For instance, all the paintings illustrated in this chapter, except for Grey-Smith’s Horseshoe Range, are much smaller than South-West Landscape near Pemberton.

Fig 2.21 Revel Cooper, South-West Landscape near Pemberton, c.1962, synthetic polymer paint on wood, 120.7 x 211.3 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA

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357 “Gaol Art to Go on Show,” West Australian.
358 Exhibition of Paintings by a Selection of Aboriginal Artists, 28 November - 9 December 1960, n.p., Exhibition pamphlet, Revel Cooper file, AGWA Research Library.
359 Ibid.
361 C.G., “Native Painters in City Show.”
Although, as I mentioned above, there are no records of exhibitions of Noongar art in Perth in 1962, a painting of the dimensions and significance of *South-West Landscape near Pemberton* suggests that a market existed for this type of art, which is not surprising in light of the preferences of the vast majority of the Perth public. As indicated in Section 4, while the local public reacted strongly against the modernist art included in the exhibition *Australian Painting*, the landscapes in the colonial and impressionist sections attracted much praise and admiration.

It is possible to discern the legacy of Cooper’s training at Carrolup by comparing *South-West Landscape near Pemberton* with Parnell Dempster’s Untitled (*Landscape with Fallen Tree*) (Fig 1.19) from four years previously. In both paintings the high-key colours capture and celebrate the exuberance of the natural environment. They also share a similar organisation of the pictorial space in horizontal bands. Adding to these features, common to many paintings of the Carrolup School, Cooper created a rather classical composition by framing the central motif, a meandering road that leads the eye towards the idealised and perhaps symbolic background, with nearly symmetrical masses of trees. Images like this one can be read as affirmations of attachment to the artist’s ancestral land. Later in life, Cooper was to express political views on Aboriginal land rights, which are discussed in Chapter Three.\(^{362}\)

Curator Brenda L. Croft sees in the Carrolup style of painting the origins of a new tradition that continues to influence the work of contemporary Noongar artists.\(^{363}\) A complementary view has been expressed by anthropologist John Stanton. For him, the landscapes of the Carrolup School are a form of reaction against European authority and their continuing production signals the willingness to maintain Noongar social and cultural identity.\(^{364}\) In the rest of the thesis, I follow the evolution of this style of art not only from a formal perspective but also as a statement of cultural identity.

6. Conclusions

The interest in opening up to new ideas and practices observed in the Perth art scene of 1953 continued throughout the decade, leading to a phase of experimentation with a range of developments in the recent art of Britain, France and the United States. Chapter Two highlights the outcomes of these experiments that by 1962 had produced local versions of late modernism in architecture, sculpture and painting.

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\(^{362}\) Kleinert, “Cooper, Revel Ronald (1934-1983).”

\(^{363}\) Croft and AGWA, *Indigenous Art*, 87.

\(^{364}\) Stanton, *Nyungar Landscapes*, 5 and 29.
The most visible results of this period of creative explorations were undoubtedly the new buildings completed in the early 1960s, many as part of the preparations for the VII British Empire and Commonwealth Games. The desire to organise a large international event was in itself evidence of the confidence of a growing and affluent city with the resources to project an image of progress and modernity to the world. These resources included not only economic capital but also, in Bourdieu’s terms, cultural capital as demonstrated by the first locally trained architects, who after completing postgraduate studies overseas, mostly in Britain, were able to adapt the latest technologies and aesthetic vocabulary to the local requirements, developing in the process their version of modernism which changed the outlook of the city. The new pared-down buildings provided an ideal setting for the first flourishing of local sculpture. The examples of modernist sculpture that started to appear in Perth in the 1960s, complementing and enhancing the built environment, can be considered among the most innovative Australian sculpture of the time. These initial examples set the precedent for an experimental sculptural practice that has continued to evolve up to the present.

If modernism was embraced in architecture and sculpture in the Perth of the 1960s for its connotations of progress and vitality, the reception of modernist painting was more complex. The exhibitions of 1962 made clear the gap between the aesthetic judgments of the majority of the public who rejected modernist painting and those of the small group of cultural producers who favoured it. This gap is an indication of the degree of autonomy achieved by the Perth art scene in the 1960s. Two of the main elements of the artistic field, diversified art criticism and commercial galleries, were lacking in the small Perth art scene of 1953 but were fully operational by 1962. They contributed the most to establish the conditions for the art scene to move in the direction of autonomy.

The criticism written by academics affiliated to UWA legitimised local modernist art as a subject of academic study, while at the same time located it in the context of specialised discourses not easily grasped by the general public. The assessments of these critics placed painters like Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper, who produced abstracted representations of the natural environment, at the top of the artistic hierarchy. The critics’ preference for this kind of imagery coincided with the preference of the most influential art patrons for regional landscapes painted in a modernist manner.

The Perth version of late modernism could not have thrived without the support of the commercial galleries that started to appear in the late 1950s. They were instrumental in creating a market for local artists not only by promoting their work but also by bringing examples of contemporary art and
design from the rest of Australia and overseas thus expanding and shaping the taste of a generation of consumers of art. It is worth noting, however, that the examples of Australian modernism brought to Perth by the most important commercial gallery, Skinner Galleries, functioned mostly as context and not as inspiration for the local painters. In Perth, the experimental phase of the late 1950s consisted for the most part in an exploration of American Abstract Expressionism and School of Paris abstraction.

By 1962, after experimenting with different forms of abstraction, the leading Perth artists were producing semi-abstract landscapes. In a way, they produced their version of the British middle ground, a compromise “between pure abstraction and abject representation.” This return to the landscape as the dominant motif in Western Australian art can be seen as a response to the preferences of local critics and patrons discussed above. But if the restricted public of cultural producers appreciated and consumed the local version of late modernism, the majority of the public did not. For this large, general public art still meant recognisable images, especially recognisable landscapes. Consequently, the regional imagery painted by Noongar artists (Fig 2.21), mostly while in prison, was certainly more in accord with the public’s expectations than the mainstream modernist landscapes (Figs 2.12 and 2.15). Even though it is difficult to document the reception of work produced at the margins of society, there is enough evidence to suggest that Noongar art found an appreciative public in Perth in the 1960s.

Janda Gooding’s observation that landscape painting was the most valued art form in Perth in 1950 still held true more than a decade later, but the regional imagery exhibited and admired in 1962 no longer followed naturalistic conventions. Instead, its appearance had been updated by the adoption of the formalist vocabulary of modernism. However, the predominance of modernism, and even of painting, was about to be challenged by novel approaches to artmaking. Chapter Three examines the conditions in the political and cultural spheres that made possible this change, in particular the establishment of new institutions of higher education dedicated to the teaching of art.

365 Patrick Heron quoted in Garlake, *New Art New World*, 45.
The year 1975 marked an important break in the history of art in Perth signalled by the closure of Skinner Galleries and the opening of the Praxis Gallery. The former was the champion of modernism that almost single-handedly created a viable market for it in Perth. But after seventeen years of successful operations, it staged its last exhibition of the local version of late-modernist painting at the end of 1975. The opening of the Praxis gallery, an experimental space dedicated to the promotion of a completely different kind of art, was symptomatic of the profound changes happening then. Run by artists, Praxis not only supported innovative art practices at a time when painting had become an anachronistic pursuit, it also encouraged critical engagement with artmaking. Arguably, the founding of Praxis was one of the most important factors determining the direction in which art was to develop in Perth up to the present day. Praxis, however, did not appear in a vacuum. This chapter explores the changes that created the conditions for modernism’s predominance coming to an end and the onset of a more diverse and reflexive approach to art.

I examine first changes in the political sphere that favoured the expansion and diversification of the Australian art scene and, to a lesser extent, the Perth art scene in the 1970s. Then I focus on the local conditions to consider changes brought about by the extraordinary increase in the number and type of art galleries servicing the Perth market and by reforms of the higher education system that altered the training and professional status of artists. In this regard, I study in particular the effects of the influx of British sculptors conversant with international avant-garde practices on local sculpture. These artists came to Perth as part of the arrangements to implement the new art training system.

The section on exhibitions contrasts the art shown by the best-known modernist painters of the time, then at the peak of their fame, with the conceptual work and experimental techniques of emerging artists. In the last section of the chapter, I discuss the promotional strategies implemented by the Aboriginal Arts Board in the 1970s. Although these strategies ignored art made in urban centres, such as Perth, the activities of the Board still indirectly supported the work of Noongar artists. I consider in this context the landscapes exhibited by Revel Cooper and their potential reading, from a postcolonial perspective, as an affirmation of Noongar identity.
1. The Artistic Field and the Field of Power

In his analytical framework for the study of cultural production, Pierre Bourdieu locates the artistic field within the larger field of power, which in addition to cultural power encompasses political and economic power. Notwithstanding the degree of autonomy attained by the artistic field in establishing an internal hierarchy, its functioning is affected by interactions with the agents of political and economic power. In the following two subsections, I outline changes in the cultural policies of the Commonwealth and State Governments between 1973 and 1975 that had major effects on the Australian and Perth art scenes. Although the artistic field is in a subordinate position with respect to political power, the symbolic capital of artists can be valuable for the competing political formations seeking either to conserve the established order or aspiring to change it. In the case at hand, a reformist Commonwealth Government attempted to advance the interests of the agents of the artistic field and deploy their symbolic capital in the implementation of changes that challenged a long-established social order.

1.1 The Year Australian Art Became Radicalised

By 1975 the arts community in Australia had gone through a period of growing confidence thanks to the measures put in place by the first Labor Government to come to power in twenty three years. The left-of-centre government of Gough Whitlam took office in December 1972 and started to implement, almost immediately, a social reform agenda that included substantial support for the arts thus helping to create expectations of a cultural revival. Hardly a month had passed since the Prime Minister’s inauguration when he invited twenty-four people to form the Australia Council in January 1973. The objectives of this organisation were:

To encourage excellence in the arts, to foster wider spread of interest and participation, to help develop a national identity through artistic expression and to project Australia’s image in other countries by means of the arts.

It is evident from this statement, and from the priority given to the formation of the Australia Council, that the new Government intended to assign the arts a central role in the renovation of the cultural environment it inherited from its conservative predecessors. By 1975, the Australia Council

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367 Ibid., 39.
368 Ibid., 40-41.
370 Ibid., 57.
had surpassed all previous government efforts in the amount of financial resources channelled to
the arts and also in the breadth of its organisational scope.\textsuperscript{371} It consisted of seven Boards, among
them the Visual Arts Board, the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Crafts Board.\textsuperscript{372} Through the Boards,
the Whitlam Government encouraged innovation and diversity in the arts. The Visual Arts Board, for
example, in addition to making grants to painters and sculptors, began funding supportive structures
such as non-commercial spaces for experimental art.\textsuperscript{373} Both the Aboriginal Arts Board and the Crafts
Board promoted diversity by supporting groups who had not been previously associated with the
production of art. In this respect, the decisions made by the Aboriginal Arts Board were crucial for
the successful marketing of Western Desert painting.\textsuperscript{374} They also had an effect on the reception of
Noongar art in Perth as it is discussed in Section 5 of this chapter.

The progressive measures of the Commonwealth Government did not fail to impress the arts
community. Brian McKay cited the cultural climate created by the Whitlam Government among the
reasons for his return to Australia in 1974. His recollections of this period capture some of the
expectations of the time:

In the fifties and sixties many artists left Australia for the United States and London, because
of a politically and aesthetically repressive government. I don’t want particularly to blame
the Menzies government but there was a lot of philistinism among the leaders of the
country. That’s one reason why I left . . . [T]hen on the horizon came Prime Minister Gough
Whitlam. He set out to alter the whole structure of the arts and to establish the Australia
Council for the Arts. It seemed to those of us who were overseas that here at last was a true
visionary in Australia, that now we would be able to develop in the aesthetic and cultural
way that we had been unable to do because of innate conservatism. It looked as if Australia
was on the brink of a cultural renaissance.\textsuperscript{375}

The Prime Minister’s authorisation to buy Jackson Pollock’s \textit{Blue Poles} for the Australian National
Gallery, in 1973, highlighted to what extent his government embraced modernism in art as a symbol
of a progressive nation open to international trends. However, the wide-spread controversy sparked

\textsuperscript{371} Terry Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 454.
\textsuperscript{372} McCulloch, \textit{Encyclopedia of Australian Art}, 57.
\textsuperscript{373} Terry Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 454.
\textsuperscript{374} American anthropologist Fred Myers provides a first-hand account of the involvement of the Aboriginal Arts
Board in the marketing of Western Desert paintings in the 1970s. Fred R. Myers, \textit{Painting Culture: The Making
Art historian Ian McLean also credits the Aboriginal Arts Board for the marketing of Western Desert paintings
as fine art. Ian McLean, \textit{How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art: Writings on Aboriginal Art
\textsuperscript{375} Brian McKay quoted in Lucreille Hanley, ed., \textit{Brian McKay: Painter} (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre
by the decision to spend AUD $1.3 million on this major abstract painting, even though by 1973 it
was hardly an avant-garde work, made clear that large sections of the population did not agree with
the cultural agenda of the Labor Government.376

The hopes for a cultural revival were dealt a blow when the Whitlam Government came to an abrupt
end in November 1975. According to Terry Smith, the irate response of artists all over the country to
the dismissal of Prime Minister Whitlam led to protest exhibitions and to a questioning of the social
roles of art.377 This awakening of political consciousness caught up with the dissenting impulses that
had been building up overseas throughout the 1960s making 1975 “the year Australian art became
well and truly radicalized.”378

1.2 Perth in 1975

As it is apparent in Brian McKay’s views, quoted above, Perth artists were well aware of the
reformist measures implemented by the Whitlam Government. In Western Australia, the Labor
Government of John Tonkin followed, to an extent, the model of the Federal Government and
established the Western Australian Arts Council (WA Arts Council) in 1973.379 Even though a
conservative government came to power in 1974, the new administration, led by (Sir) Charles Court,
continued supporting the arts through the WA Arts Council, while at the same time investing heavily
in arts infrastructure.380 Notable among the infrastructure projects of the Court Government was the
Perth Cultural Centre that included the building of a new State Art Gallery.381 In 1975, the Public
Works Department began to work on the design of the gallery.382 The building, a fine example of the
Brutalist Style (Fig 3.1) favoured by some Perth architects in the 1960s and 1970s, opened in October
1979 as part of the festivities marking the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Western Australia
as a British colony and thus became the first stage of the planned Perth Cultural Centre.383

376 The reaction to the purchase of Blue Poles in Perth is documented in Ted Snell, Cinderella on the Beach: A
Source Book of Western Australia’s Visual Culture (Nedlands: W.A.: University of Western Australia Press,
377 Terry Smith, Australian Painting, 479.
378 Ibid.
379 McCulloch, Encyclopedia of Australian Art, 1283.
381 Gregory, City of Light, 101-102.
382 “Art Gallery Plan Unlikely to Go Ahead,” Sunday Times, 31 August 1975. This article’s title refers to the plan
of installing air conditioning in the old WAAG which was cancelled, the article explained, because the building
of the new gallery was about to commence.
383 Heritage Council of Western Australia, Register of Heritage Places, “Assessment of Cultural Heritage
Significance: Art Gallery of Western Australia Complex,” 11.1 Aesthetic Value, 9 May 2006, accessed 29 June
The funds channelled to the arts through the WA Arts Council came at a very opportune moment, for the economic conditions in Perth in 1975 were not as buoyant as they had been in 1953 and 1962. By the mid-1970s the mining boom that fuelled the local economy from the early 1960s had subsided and both the Australian economy and the global economy were experiencing severe difficulties. The economic woes were due in no small part to the aftermaths of the 1973 oil crisis. In those conditions, support for the arts coming from the Commonwealth and State Governments was all the more important. It would take the rest of the decade to resolve this economic crisis. By the time the new State gallery opened, an economic recovery was well underway. It provided the resources for the extraordinary growth of Western Australia and the Perth art scene in the 1980s, which is the subject of Chapter Four.

2. The Changing Perth Art Scene

2.1 More Art Galleries

When compared to 1962, one of the most significant changes to the art scene by 1975 was the extraordinary surge in the number of exhibition venues that grew from five to twenty two. Such expansion reflected the substantial 68 % increase in the city’s population during the same period. Appendix 3 lists the art galleries operating in Perth in 1975. The impulse for this growth extended even to the public sector. For the first time since the founding of the Western Australian Art Gallery

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385 In 1962, Perth had one public gallery, three commercial galleries and the Adult Education Rooms (Appendix 2). Owned by UWA, the latter was a private space but not a commercial gallery.
(WAAG) in 1895, new public art galleries appeared in Perth namely the Fremantle Arts Centre and the Undercroft Gallery. Both opened in 1973, the former was established by the City of Fremantle with assistance from the State Government and the latter increased the presence of visual art at the University of Western Australia (UWA).\textsuperscript{387}

The Fremantle Arts Centre is an example of the efforts to reach a wider audience for the arts and encourage community participation. The Centre is not just an art gallery, although providing exhibition space is one of its aims. From its beginnings, it has offered activities such as lectures, courses, studio workshops and interaction with professional artists in residence.\textsuperscript{388} For its part, the Undercroft Gallery organised mostly exhibitions with an educational character and occasionally exhibitions by local artists. Appendix 4 presents the list of the exhibitions held at the Undercroft Gallery and other selected galleries in 1975. At this stage, UWA’s gallery operated on a limited basis because it was not a space dedicated exclusively to exhibitions but a rather large area under Winthrop Hall used also for academic activities such as exams.\textsuperscript{389}

The rapid expansion of the art market saw the number of commercial art galleries soar from three in 1962 to eighteen in 1975. They ranged from the nationally-recognised Skinner Galleries to small establishments that painter and art critic Cedric Baxter called “fringe galleries” and art critic Murray Mason described as “cottage galleries.”\textsuperscript{390} The Skinner Galleries was the undisputed leader amongst the private galleries. Rose Skinner was able to organise major shows by prestigious Australian artists, particularly after 1970 when she had secured a position in the national art market.\textsuperscript{391} The observations of author and former museum director Gavin Fry provide an indication of the reputation of the Skinner Galleries:

\begin{quote}
Arthur Boyd, Albert Tucker and Fred Williams were all happy to exhibit at the Skinner Galleries because it gave them a truly national profile while also ensuring a good financial result, an important consideration given the cost of moving pictures so far across the country.\textsuperscript{392}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{388} Templeman, “The Fremantle Arts Centre,” 41.

\textsuperscript{389} Barrett-Lennard and Watson, \textit{A Partial View}, 11.


\textsuperscript{391} From 1970 to 1975, Skinner organised three exhibitions by Arthur Boyd, three by Lawrence Daws, two by Sidney Nolan, two by Charles Blackman, and one each by Leonard French, Elwyn Lynn, Albert Tucker, Judy Cassab, Ray Crooke, Fred Williams, Margaret Olley and British painter Patrick Heron. Records of the Skinner Galleries, J. S. Battye Library, MN1320, ACC 4043A, n.p.

\textsuperscript{392} Gavin Fry, \textit{Robert Juniper} (Roseville, N.S.W.: Beagle Press, 2009), 56.
The success of the Skinner Galleries was fundamental for the development of the Perth art scene. It made it possible for the public to see recent work by artists of high standing in the eastern states thus contributing to educate consumers of art and to establish a context for the assessment of the local product. Yet for all its prestige, the Skinner Galleries was not showing recent trends in contemporary art. Rather, it catered to the taste of a mature and affluent clientele interested mostly in modernist paintings by well-established artists. This successful commercial strategy led to the exclusion of other art forms and of emerging artists. For example, all the exhibitions held at Skinner’s in 1975 consisted of paintings while it had organised only occasional shows of sculpture, ceramics and tapestries in previous years. Significantly, this was happening at a time when the relevance of painting was seriously questioned by new practices such as conceptual art in Europe and North America. A similar situation was developing in Australia where according to the observations of Terry Smith, “painting became a dependent, incidental, anachronistic mode of expression” during the 1970s. Nonetheless, concentrating on established painters ensured the prosperity of Skinner Galleries until its last exhibition in 1975 brought to an end the pioneering era of commercial art galleries in Perth.

After the closure of Skinner Galleries, the Lister Gallery became, in many ways, its successor. The two galleries attracted such a similar clientele that some of the artists who had been closely associated with Skinner, for instance Robert Juniper, began exhibiting at the Lister Gallery. Like its predecessor, Lister has concentrated on established painters both local and from the eastern states. Its continuous presence in the Perth market since 1972 demonstrates that this is a winning strategy with the local consumers of art.

The increased complexity of the Perth art scene was evident in the differentiation among commercial galleries in terms of the type of art they promoted. Whereas in 1962, the only two significant commercial venues, Skinner Galleries and David Foulkes Taylor’s showroom, were selling rather similar mainstream modernist art, by 1975 two galleries had appeared that promoted more experimental or avant-garde art, the Desborough Galleries and the Old Fire Station Gallery. Both focused on innovative art produced mainly by emerging Perth artists.

395 Terry Smith, Australian Painting, 453.
Leone Martin-Smith established the Desborough Galleries in 1973, with the intention of supporting emerging talent. By 1975, her gallery was the place to see the most adventurous art, particularly contemporary sculpture (Appendix 4). An exhibition of sculpture, paintings and prints by Les Kossatz, came very close to being an installation, among the first seen in Perth. Under the heading “Sheep 1969-74,” the catalogue of this exhibition listed six works made of metal, covered with sheepskin. There are no images of the event, but according to descriptions in the press the works might have resembled Sheeps on a Couch (Fig 3.2) which was acquired for the then embryonic national collection. The Desborough Galleries closed in May 1975. Fittingly, its final exhibition showcased the work of an emerging local sculptor, Hans Arkeveld (Fig 3.3).

Fig 3.2 Les Kossatz, Sheep on Couch, 1972-73, sheep skin, stainless steel, dyed leather, chrome plated and galvanized steel, 91 x 203 x 91 cm, National Gallery of Australia, purchased in 1975

Fig 3.3 Hans Arkeveld, Bird and Beast, 1974, oiled wood and metal, 80 x 48.5 x 104 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA

399 Murray Mason, “Art,” West Australian, 10 May 1975.
The other commercial venue dedicated to recent art, the Old Fire Station Gallery (OFSG), fared better than the Desborough Galleries and operated for eight years, from 1968 to 1976. David and Rie Heymans (Fig 3.4) opened the OFSG with the aim of providing “a living art centre where the artists and the general public could gather and exchange views in a vital atmosphere.”\(^\text{400}\) It is not fortuitous that this statement could also have applied to the showroom of designer David Foulkes Taylor, discussed in Chapter 2. After studying interior design at Perth Technical College, David Heymans worked for Foulkes Taylor.\(^\text{401}\) Through this connection, the Heymans were introduced to the Perth art scene and became familiar with many young artists in the 1960s.\(^\text{402}\) To an extent, the OFSG followed Foulkes Taylor’s precedent in showing modernist craft and fine art in the same space.\(^\text{403}\) The photograph below shows a temporary display of tribal art at the OFSG in 1969.

![Fig 3.4 Rie and David Heymans in the Old Fire Station Gallery, 1969, National Archives of Australia, Record Search Reference 1/1969/38](image)

Rie Heymans was the sole manager of the OFSG in 1975 and by then had been actively engaged with contemporary art for nearly ten years. Her interest was awakened during a stay in New York in 1966.\(^\text{404}\) Impressed by the city’s vibrant art scene, she became an assiduous visitor to galleries and started a course in art history.\(^\text{405}\) Back in Perth, Heymans encouraged young, innovative artists who had demonstrated a certain promise. Her exhibition space provided an alternative for artists seeking to establish a reputation, but not necessarily interested in being associated with the type of art seen

\(^{400}\) Summary of the history of the Old Fire Station Gallery, document dated May 1976, Old Fire Station Gallery file, AGWA Research Library.
\(^{402}\) Ibid.
\(^{403}\) David Foulkes Taylor’s design gallery closed after his tragic death in 1966.
\(^{405}\) Ibid.
at the Skinner Galleries. Examples of up-and-coming artists who exhibited at the OFSG during 1974 and 1975 were Brian Blanchflower and Miriam Stannage.\footnote{List of Solo Exhibitions at Old Fire Station Gallery, Old Fire Station Gallery file, AGWA Research Library.}

The contrast between Skinner’s and the OFSG is indicative of the significant changes happening in the 1970s, in particular the turning away from the sphere of influence of the British scene towards the American one. Whereas Skinner had asked for the advice of London art critics to run her gallery, Heymans was inspired by the contemporary art galleries she saw in New York.\footnote{Rie Heymans owned and managed the OFSG for seven years but the gallery operated for one more year after she sold it to John and Kay Hansen. Old Fire Station Gallery file, AGWA Research Library.} It was an outstanding outcome for Heymans to keep her gallery open for seven years as this implies that she found a balance between the promotion of innovative art and commercial success. Even though she sold the OFSG at the end of 1975, Heymans continued to play a central role in the Perth art scene as the curator of UWA’s art collection.\footnote{“The Other Side of Warburton,” \textit{Daily News}, 17 October 1975.} Her dynamic management style and interest in contemporary art set the groundwork to transform the Undercroft Gallery into today’s Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

Further evidence of the diversity of the local art scene in the 1970s was the opening of commercial galleries specialising in particular sectors of the market such as prints, crafts and Aboriginal art. The most important of them, for the purposes of this thesis, the Aboriginal Traditional Arts Gallery opened in St George’s Terrace, in the centre of Perth in 1975.\footnote{“The Other Side of Warburton,” \textit{Daily News}, 17 October 1975.} Before its opening, Aboriginal objects had been sold in places such as the Colbaroo shop, located in a basement on Murray Street, or the shop of the W.A. Native Welfare Department in East Perth, but not in galleries.\footnote{Croft and Gooding, \textit{South West Central}, 17; John Stanton, interview by author, Perth, 15 October 2015.} Owned by a company funded to market Aboriginal art, this venue was an outcome of the cultural policies of the Commonwealth Government that raised the profile of certain types of Aboriginal art.\footnote{Aboriginal Arts and Crafts owned commercial galleries in cities around Australia. Established in 1971, its funding increased substantially during the Whitlam years. Its name changed to Aboriginal Arts Australia in 1986. Myers, \textit{Painting Culture}, 135, 136, 200.} Notably, Noongar art was not sold at the Aboriginal Traditional Arts Gallery. In Section 5, I consider the status of Noongar paintings made in Perth, which at the time were excluded from the artistic field and consequently were traded outside its boundaries.

Another kind of exhibition venue also appeared in Perth in 1975, the independent, artist-run space. But since this development represented more than just adding another gallery to the growing art
scene, I examine it in Section 3 in the context of the new art practices and the diversity of points of view that emerged in the 1970s.

### 2.2 Less Art Criticism

As discussed in Chapter Two, the regular publication of critical reviews in the local academic journals *The Critic* and *Westerly* contributed greatly to the re-evaluation of art as a serious endeavour in Perth in the 1960s. Yet in the following decade, art criticism nearly disappeared after *The Critic* ceased publication in 1970 and *Westerly* became mostly a literary magazine. Conditions reverted to those prevailing in the 1950s when the daily press was the only regular outlet for art criticism. In this respect, however, Perth was not that different to other cities around the country. Examining the characteristics of 1970s painting in the east of Australia, Terry Smith remarked that writing about contemporary art occurred mainly in newspapers and cited *Art and Australia* as the only art magazine with a permanent presence back then.\(^\text{412}\)

In a way, 1975 represented the lowest point for locally-published art criticism, but there were signs of improvement on the horizon. The Cultural Development Council of Western Australia commenced the publication of the monthly magazine *Artlook* in December 1974.\(^\text{413}\) It was taken over in 1975 by the Nine Club, a non-profit organisation founded by journalists and academics.\(^\text{414}\) Initially the quality of this periodical, covering both the performing and the visual arts, was rather poor but eventually it achieved national circulation before closing in 1983.\(^\text{415}\) Tom Gibbons and Patrick Hutchings were the only well-known critics who wrote for *Artlook* in 1975, although they contributed only two articles each. From 1976, *Westerly* started the regular section “Westview,” a quarterly review of the arts in Western Australia that included commentary on the visual arts.

### 2.3 The New Art Schools and Sculpture

The training of artists underwent an important transformation in Australia during the 1960s, a transformation that both reflected the changing aspirations of artists and created the conditions for increased professionalization of the visual arts. Bourdieu’s research into cultural production has

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\(^{412}\) Terry Smith, *Australian Painting*, 456-457. Smith attributed the scarcity of periodicals featuring critical art writing to financial difficulties, surmounted only at the end of the decade with grants from the Visual Arts Board.

\(^{413}\) “There Comes a Time,” *Artlook* 1, no. 3 (1975): 1.


\(^{415}\) “Biographical Note,” Papers of Access Press, [1974-2008], MS126, UWA Special Collections.
highlighted the role of the educational system as the indispensable means for the reproduction and growth of the artistic field. Particularly relevant in the case at hand is Bourdieu’s concept of habitus that illuminates how this reproduction takes place. Habitus is a property of the agents acting in a cultural field manifested as a set of deeply internalised dispositions that generates practices and perceptions. It can be seen as the cognitive construction of reality shared by the agents of a cultural field. Hence “habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world.”

Although not the only mechanism that propagates these dispositions, art education plays an important part in doing so when it inculcates shared values and perhaps more importantly when it demarcates the range of possibilities the participants in a particular field are prepared to envisage.

I would suggest that all the major developments observed in the Australian visual arts and in the Perth art scene after the 1960s, either originated or were influenced by the changes in art education that occurred in that decade. The Commonwealth Government initiated a radical reform of the higher education system in 1961, when it commissioned a report from the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia. Published in 1964 and 1965 as the Martin Report, the findings and recommendations of the Committee highlighted the link between tertiary education and economic growth. One of its key recommendations was the raising of the status of technical education by establishing a parallel system of colleges of advanced education or institutes of technology. In the 1950s there were two main paths for those wishing to continue their education after completing secondary schooling, vocational training or a university degree. Aiming at achieving professional standards in technological education, the new autonomous institutes opened a third option. They were envisioned as more vocationally focused than universities but offering higher

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416 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 123.
417 Randal Johnson, introduction to The Field of Cultural Production by Pierre Bourdieu, 5.
421 Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia, Tertiary Education in Australia [Martin Report], accessed 12/01/2017, http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/228215. The Government commissioned the study in response to the conditions brought about by the post-war prosperity. The demands of a booming economy combined with the rapid population growth of the period to put pressure on institutions of higher education.
422 Ibid.
qualifications than the old vocational schools. The authors of the *Martin Report* proposed to locate the training of artists within the new system of technological education, explaining their rationale in the following economic terms: “The advantage of placing a school of art in a technical institution is that art can be brought into the closest and most fruitful contact with industrial design and technology.”

With the exception of the National Gallery School in Melbourne and a few private art schools or academies, art training in Australia had been oriented to the formation of either skilled workers or arts and crafts teachers up to the 1950s. Consequently, it had been offered in technical colleges or trade schools. As indicated in Chapter One, Perth Technical College fulfilled this function in Western Australia. In the aftermath of the *Martin Report*, courses leading to Associateships in Design, Fine Art (Painting or Sculpture) and Art Studies were transferred from the Perth Technical College to the Department of Art and Design of the then newly established Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) in 1968. Perth Technical College ceased offering training in art that did not have a trade or recreational focus in 1969, when its Diploma in Art (Painting and Sculpture) moved to the Claremont Technical College.

The transfer of art training to institutes of technology around Australia in the 1960s underscores how the notions of art and artists were shifting at the time. For instance, a 1970 report by the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board stated:

> Until recently the attitude to the encouragement of artists had been that the market itself has operated as the most satisfactory supporter of the artist of ability, and that while it continued to function adequately in this way it was undesirable to interfere with the mechanism by introducing other forms of assistance to artists. However, it now appears that while this may be true with regard to painters it may not have the same validity when applied to certain other branches of the visual arts such as sculpture, and possibly to the truly ‘avant-garde’ artists of any generation whose work rarely has much initial appeal except perhaps to a very limited public.

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424 Ibid., 28.
427 Erickson, *Art and Design in Western Australia*, 87, 268 and 269. Plans for a new institute of technology in Western Australia had started in 1960 hence the *Martin Report* reinforced the need for it.
428 Ibid., 270.
Such statement implies that by 1970, even before the Whitlam Government came to power, the promotion of change and innovation in art was seen as a desirable and legitimate use of public resources. The avant-garde was no longer a troublesome, bohemian underclass but the Research and Development arm of the visual arts. The newly acquired status of recent art, together with its updated visual arts label, was supported by academic discourses coming from university departments established, for the most part in the 1960s and 1970s, to study the history and theory of art.

The University of Melbourne founded a Chair of Fine Arts as far back as 1947. Staffed by an impressive group of émigré and Australian scholars, the Department of Fine Arts of the University of Melbourne became the centre of authoritative discourse on the visual arts in Australia. The next Department of Fine Arts appeared at the University of Sydney in 1961, but it was the establishment of the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the same university in 1967 that highlighted the growing attention given to the study of recent art. The Power Institute was charged with making available “to the people of Australia the latest ideas and theories in the plastic arts.” Flinders University in Adelaide created a Discipline of Fine Arts in 1966 and a Chair of Visual Arts in 1974; La Trobe University founded a Chair of Art History in 1972 and Monash University a Department of Visual Arts in 1974. Perth, though, would have to wait until 1983 for UWA to establish the Centre for Fine Arts.

Thus by 1975, training in art took place at institutes or colleges of higher education which awarded professional qualifications, while the role of art and its history were defined by the writings of academics affiliated to the growing number of university departments dedicated to the study of art. The graduates coming from this system were formed in an environment that privileged professional practice informed by critical discourses in contrast to the previous focus on clients and technical skills. Furthermore, under the new arrangements the degree of autonomy of the artistic field tended to increase when the art schools, as part of higher education institutions, gained control over decisions such as entry requirements, curriculum content and hiring of staff. These conditions privileged peer assessment as the central principle organising the functioning of the art schools.

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431 Ibid., 33.
432 Ibid., 29-30.
433 Ibid., 37.
434 Prior to the changes of the 1960s, art training had been under the control of the various State departments of education or technical education. Sanders, “The Mildura Triennials 1961-1978,” 45. Perth Technical College was controlled by the Technical Education Department of the Western Australian Government.
In Perth, a similar environment existed at WAIT. With more resources than the Perth Technical College and with a focus on professional standards, WAIT’s Department of Art and Design hired young British graduates to teach in two main areas, painting and sculpture. Between 1970 and 1972, painters Mac Betts (Fig 3.5), Douglas Chambers (Fig 3.6) and Brian Blanchflower started teaching at WAIT, while sculptors Hugh Child, Terry New, Don Prince, Ann and Chris Heyring taught sculpture courses in the 1960s and 1970s.435

Fig 3.5 Mac Betts, Greenhead, 1975, oil on cotton, 131 x 175 cm, UWA Art Collection

Fig 3.6 Douglas Chambers, Flying Over, 1976, acrylic, oil and collage on canvas, 194.5 x 170 cm, City of Fremantle Art Collection

The three painting lecturers had completed their training in Britain by 1961.\textsuperscript{436} Betts and Chambers (Figs 3.5 and 3.6) practised a form of abstraction that was not far from the style of painting, derived from School of Paris abstraction, fashionable among British artists in the 1950s. Although, as discussed in Chapter One, the attempts at revitalising British painting in the 1950s were motivated by the desire of young artists to put an end to its insularity and improve its international standing, this kind of abstraction did not achieve much international recognition. By contrast, British sculpture was at the forefront of the international art scene during the 1950s and 1960s, developing almost in parallel with minimalism in the United States.

The group leading the changes formed around (Sir) Anthony Caro who started teaching sculpture at St Martin’s School of Art in London in the 1950s. Caro’s students - among them Phillip King and William Tucker - came to be known as the New Generation of sculptors after the exhibitions \textit{New Generation - Painting} and \textit{New Generation - Sculpture} were held at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1964 and 1965 respectively.\textsuperscript{437} Significant cross-fertilisation occurred between the painters and sculptors affiliated to the two groups, especially regarding the theoretical bases of their practices.\textsuperscript{438} According to British art historian David Mellor, their close interactions brought about a challenge by the sculptors “in the very areas that the painters had staked out – flat fields of colour; single, emblematic images; industrial materials; environmental scale and spectatorial confrontation.”\textsuperscript{439} Mellor’s statement underscores the progressive blurring of the boundaries between painting and sculpture in the 1960s.

The New Generation sculptors took sculptural practice in a completely different direction to that of the humanist and figurative concerns of their predecessor, Henry Moore. Caro did the most to end Moore’s influence by pioneering the industrial aesthetic in Britain. His explorations of new materials and processes, culminated in sculptures made by welding pieces of painted steel (Fig 3.7). Notably, the New Generation collapsed the separation between the work of art and the world of the spectator when they installed their sculptures on the ground, with no plinth or any other demarcation.\textsuperscript{440} Avant-garde British sculpture was brought to international attention when Caro and six of his former students were represented in one of the earliest surveys of Minimalist art, \textit{Primary}.

\textsuperscript{436} Betts graduated from Goldsmith School of Art, London, in 1958; Chambers from the Royal College of Art in 1961 and Blanchflower from Brighton College of Art in 1961.
\textsuperscript{438} Mellor, \textit{The Sixties Art Scene in London}, 94.
\textsuperscript{439} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{440} Engaging with the philosophical bases of art making, particularly with the implications of Phenomenology and Existentialism, the New Generation sculptors asserted the materiality of their art by locating it as part of the world of the spectator. Mellor, \textit{The Sixties Art Scene in London}, 94.
Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors, presented at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1966.\textsuperscript{441} The ambition of Caro’s art was rich material for critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. The latter made Caro’s sculptures the centre of his arguments in “Art and Objecthood,” possibly one of the most significant essays on the art of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{442}

Fig 3.7 Anthony Caro, Early One Morning, 1962, painted steel and aluminium, 289.6 x 619.8 x 335.3 cm, Tate Collection

The sculptors who came to teach at WAIT trained, for the most part, in Britain in the 1960s. They brought with them professional dispositions, or professional habitus in Bourdieu’s terms, which, I would argue, played a part in the formation of their students. Dispositions can be more important than technical skills. For many British sculptors of the 1960s, their dispositions encompassed an ambitious engagement with the theoretical bases of art and a spirit of enquiry that sought to expand the limits of their practice. Local art historian Robyn Taylor has described the sculpture of the early WAIT graduates as formalist and experimental “with an emphasis on materials and context.”\textsuperscript{443} She attributes these characteristics to the British training of the lecturers who taught at WAIT during its early years.\textsuperscript{444}

The case of sculptors Lou Lambert and David Jones illustrate the dynamics put in motion by the teaching of art at tertiary level. Both artists graduated from WAIT in the 1970s. After obtaining a grant, Lambert (Fig 3.8) travelled to London to work as assistant to Phillip King between 1976 and 1978.\textsuperscript{445} This was a valuable opportunity to study the working methods of one of the best-known sculptors of the New Generation group. The experience was to have a long-term effect on Lambert’s

\textsuperscript{441} Foster et al., Art since 1900, 536-537.
\textsuperscript{443} Taylor, One Hundred Years of Western Australian Sculpture, 22.
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid.
sustained exploration of materials for his sculptural projects. For his part, Jones completed a Master’s Degree in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London in 1979. His experimental approach would lead him to produce Land Art and installations, which are discussed in Chapter Four.

On their return to Perth, both Lambert and Jones taught at WAIT for a number of years, thus contributing to the formation of the next generation of sculptors.

The new courses at WAIT and the influx of professionally trained sculptors sustained the interest in sculpture that had started to emerge in the 1960s. In addition, Margaret Priest and Howard Taylor added a local component to the formation of new sculptors when they joined the teaching staff of WAIT on a part-time basis. By 1973, the number of sculptors was large enough to establish the W.A. Sculptors’ Association, with Priest as its first president. The Association organised events such as Sculpture in the City, an outdoor exhibition seen in Forrest Place as part of the 1976 Perth Festival (Fig 3.9). The regard for the British sculptors affiliated to the New Generation group was evident in the arrangements the Association made for Phillip King to visit Perth and hold a workshop for local practitioners when Sculpture in the City was on view.

Fig 3.8 Lou Lambert, Kazoo Screw Too, 1976, steel and acrylic lacquer, 240 x 230 x 460 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA

The new courses at WAIT and the influx of professionally trained sculptors sustained the interest in sculpture that had started to emerge in the 1960s. In addition, Margaret Priest and Howard Taylor added a local component to the formation of new sculptors when they joined the teaching staff of WAIT on a part-time basis. By 1973, the number of sculptors was large enough to establish the W.A. Sculptors’ Association, with Priest as its first president. The Association organised events such as Sculpture in the City, an outdoor exhibition seen in Forrest Place as part of the 1976 Perth Festival (Fig 3.9). The regard for the British sculptors affiliated to the New Generation group was evident in the arrangements the Association made for Phillip King to visit Perth and hold a workshop for local practitioners when Sculpture in the City was on view.

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447 Taylor, One Hundred Years, 22.
448 Ibid., 21.
By this stage modernist sculpture had become a common feature of the urban environment. The most ambitious example, *The Black Stump* by Howard Taylor (Fig 3.10), was installed in the forecourt of the AMP tower on St George’s Terrace in 1975. This prime location speaks of Taylor’s high standing as a sculptor at the time. Taylor first explored the representation of the burnt tree stump in painting in the early 1950s.\(^{451}\) After a typically long process of refinement, his minimalist sculpture effectively evoked a feature of the natural landscape in the middle of the city, in a way best explained by the artist: “The group can be seen as an example of the intention to make equivalents for an experience of the landscape. Simplification, reduction, down to the fundamentals of a complex naturalistic subject.”\(^{452}\) A successful site-specific work, it linked the street and the building’s entrance (Fig 3.10) with its streamlined, geometrical structure echoing the shapes in the environment surrounding it. Regrettably, *The Black Stump* lost its original context when it was relocated to the University of Western Australia in 1991 (Fig 3.11).


An abstract, minimalist aesthetic might have been the preferred option among the sculptors training or teaching at WAIT but there was another type of sculpture made in Perth in the 1970s, which continued to develop well into the 1990s, mostly by artists associated with the Claremont School of Art like Hans Arkeveld (Figs 3.3 and 3.12).\textsuperscript{453} Figurative in style, Robyn Taylor has characterised it as “the humanist tradition in sculpture.”\textsuperscript{454} A similar phenomenon occurred in the eastern states. Curator Graeme Sturgeon grouped under the label “informalists,” a number of sculptors who working mainly in a figurative mode produced idiosyncratic sculptures with little connection to the international trends of the 1960s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{455}

\textsuperscript{454} Taylor, \textit{One Hundred Years of Western Australian Sculpture}, 22.
\textsuperscript{455} Sturgeon, \textit{The Development of Australian Sculpture}, 213-217.
2.4 Old and New Collectors

As seen in Chapter One, a few individuals had started to collect locally-made art in the 1950s, providing much needed financial support to the emerging modernists of the time. Art collecting became more widespread in the larger art scene of the 1970s. Besides the obvious financial benefits, art collectors are important agents of the artistic field who contribute to generate belief in the value of art. Their prestige can add to the reputation of the artists whose work they acquire and, in the case of articulate collectors, their informed comments create some of the symbolic meanings ascribed to the artworks they own. Two generations of private collectors were active in the market in 1975. Collectors of the older generation, notably Drs Salek Minc and Roy Constable, were still acquiring works by their preferred painters, Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor and Robert Juniper. The writings of Minc, a respected connoisseur, on the art of Robert Juniper illustrate how the knowledge of a collector can enhance the reputation of an artist. Minc not only acquired Juniper’s paintings, he also wrote extolling the qualities he admired in them. In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation joined these well-known collectors. Among the most influential, from the point of view of the future growth of the Perth art scene, were Joe and Rose Skinner, Janet and Robert Holmes à Court, and the Cruthers family.

Unlike the earlier personal collections mentioned above, neither the Skinner nor the Cruthers collections focused on local art. Both collections included mainly modernist Australian art from the eastern states. The Cruthers collection gradually narrowed its scope to women’s art. To reflect this change, it was renamed as the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art in the 1990s. The Holmes à Court collection, arguably one of the most important private collections in Perth, has changed in name and focus a number of times over the last fifty years. Known today as the Janet Holmes à Court collection, it started in 1966 with the purchase of a few paintings by artists living in

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456 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 78.
459 Cruthers and Kinsella, Into the Light, 9.
In the 1980s its range expanded to the whole of Australian art and to French Impressionism and Post-impressionism. Following the death of Robert Holmes à Court in 1990, its focus narrowed to Australian art again, within which Aboriginal art and Western Australian painting are particularly well represented. Its role in the Perth art scene is discussed in Chapter Four that covers the period when it was at its most expansive.

Several public art collections were established between 1962 and 1975 and all of them, except for the City of Fremantle Art Collection, were owned by educational institutions. This fact underlines the significance of the changes in higher education described in subsection 2.3. The Claremont Teachers’ College began collecting works of art in 1947 and by 1974 all the other Teachers’ Colleges (Graylands, Nedlands and Mount Lawley) had art collections. The amalgamation of the Colleges’ collections created the nucleus of what is currently the Edith Cowan University (ECU) Art Collection. With the intention of developing a collection, WAIT formed an Art Acquisitions Committee in 1968. This collection, known today as Curtin University Art Collection, has been notable for initiating the practice of commissioning major sculptural projects in the 1970s. Murdoch University established an art collection in 1974 and an Art Acquisitions Committee the following year.

The Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia (R & I Bank), now known as Bankwest, began acquiring works of art in 1975, after WAAG curator Lou Klepac approached it with the suggestion that investing in local art was a worthy manner of supporting the cultural development of Western Australia. This led to the formation of what was quite possibly the first corporate collection in Perth. Later in the decade, other companies followed the precedent set by the R & I Bank and

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462 Ibid.
463 The City of Fremantle started an art collection in 1958, with a gift from Sir Claude Hotchin, but it remained virtually static until its management was assigned to the Fremantle Arts Centre in 1973. André Lipscombe, *Fertile Soil: Fifty Years of the City of Fremantle Art Collection* (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Press, 2008), 17.
465 Ibid.
467 Ibid.
470 The first purchase for the Wesfarmes Collection was made in 1977.
corporate collecting became increasingly important in terms of patronage, of prestige and as supplement to the holdings of public collections. Corporate collecting is discussed in Chapter Four.

3. Alternative Points of View and New Art Practices

The influx of young British artists and the return of WAIT graduates who had furthered their art training in Britain energised the Perth scene of the 1970s with new ideas regarding innovative art practices, the role of artists in society and the ways they could organise themselves to reach their goals. Early in 1975, a group of artists, poets, art lecturers and musicians had a meeting with the intention of “setting up and running an experimentally orientated co-operative organisation which [could] provide facilities for artistic exploration and exhibition.”

Both the group of artists and the exhibition space they established came to be known as Praxis. The choice of name is a clear signal of the group’s intellectual ambitions since the concept of ‘praxis,’ as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s, relates to the deployment of theory not only to understand the world but to guide actions aimed at transforming it. Hence it would imply, in this case, informed art practices seeking to transform the local scene.

It was not fortuitous that Praxis appeared in Perth at the time when commercial galleries had proliferated and art collecting was becoming a widespread fashionable pursuit among wealthy individuals. The founding of Praxis must be seen in the context of an international trend put in motion by artists who wanted complete control over the distribution of their work. Younger generations of artists who challenged the formalist focus of modernism and the established social order in the 1960s, were looking for forms of expression which would not feed into the commercial art system. They rejected, or rather despised, the commercial side of artistic expression. New practices such as installation and performance art were deliberately resistant to commercialisation and often shown in alternative spaces, mostly controlled by artists. The roots of this movement can

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471 “Praxis Submission to the Community Arts Committee of the Australia Council,” April 1975, quoted in Praxis Group (W.A.) and John Barrett-Lennard, Praxis in Practice: An Overview of Ten Years of Western Australia’s Contemporary Art Space (Fremantle, W.A.: Praxis, 1986), footnote 1, n.p.


be traced back to the co-operatives of American artists in the 1950s and to the British co-operative SPACE (Space Provision, Artistic, Cultural and Educational) that helped artists to transform derelict industrial sites into affordable studio spaces in London in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{474}

By 1975 there were alternative galleries across North America and Europe. In Australia one of the earliest examples of this type of venue, Inhibodress, was founded in Sydney by Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy in 1970, as an artists' co-operative and alternative space for conceptual art and emergent practices such as performance pieces.\textsuperscript{475} Inhibodress had been closed by the time the Experimental Art Foundation, another precedent for Praxis, appeared in Adelaide in 1974.\textsuperscript{476} The Praxis group opened their alternative space in the centre of Perth with an exhibition that included sculpture and painting in 1975.\textsuperscript{477}

John Barrett-Lennard, director of Praxis in the 1980s, claims that the characteristics of this collective, in its early years, were determined to a large extent by the many members who had “experience and knowledge of British experimental galleries and art labs.”\textsuperscript{478} The line-up for the first Praxis exhibition supports his claim. The most prominent artists represented in it were British painters Brian Blanchflower (Fig 3.13), Mac Betts (Fig 3.5), Douglas Chambers (Fig 3.6) and Judy Chambers. The first three were teaching at WAIT, while Judy Chambers was teaching at Perth Technical College.

\textbf{Fig 3.13} Brian Blanchflower, \textit{Helios Probe}, 1974, acrylic and enamel on linen, 151 x 213 cm, Private Collection, exhibited: \textit{Space-Scape}, OFSG, 1974; \textit{Praxis Group Show}, Praxis, 1975

\textsuperscript{475} Terry Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 529.
\textsuperscript{476} Maria Bilske, “Unsentimental Experimental: The Experimental Art Foundation 25 Years on,” \textit{Artlink} 20, no. 3 (2000): 65.
\textsuperscript{477} Praxis Group and Barrett-Lennard, \textit{Praxis in Practice}, n.p.; Cinanni and Situation Vacant Group, \textit{Situation Vacant}, 25. The first Praxis gallery was located in Murray Mews, Murray Street. After it closed in 1977, the group held events in different venues until they opened a new Praxis gallery in Fremantle in 1981.
The rather conventional media seen in the initial exhibition at Praxis was an exception when compared to other events staged at the same venue during the couple of years it operated in the city centre. They included poetry readings, installations, a show of found objects, audio visual displays and multimedia artworks. For example the first Praxis event reported in the local press, Theo Koning’s installation *From Winter Storm*, consisted of drift wood and other found objects scattered on strewn sand. Koning, a Claremont Technical College graduate, was one of the first artists to exhibit installations in Perth. At the time of his solo show at Praxis, he had already presented the installation *Hot Chook Shop* (Fig 3.14) at the Fremantle Arts Centre in 1974.

![Fig 3.14 Theo Koning, Hot Chook Shop, 1974, mixed media, State Art Collection, AGWA](image-url)

Critic Cedric Baxter offered an informative description of the new venue:

> Another new venture is the Praxis gallery-workshop-meeting place of the arts. It is a self-generating, non-profit making venture, and is idealistically hoping to offer a practical outlet for artists in many fields who are not committed or *do not wish to be committed to a major venture in a commercial gallery* (my emphasis).

As Baxter pointed out, Praxis was a meeting place for the arts but it was also a place designed to stimulate critical thinking. During its first year of existence, it hosted visits by two radical figures,

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479 List of exhibitions at the Praxis Gallery from October 1975 to November 1976, Praxis file, AGWA Research Library.
American critic Lucy Lippard and expatriate Western Australian experimental artist Tim Burns. In 1975, the Power Institute invited Lippard to deliver the Eighth Power Foundation art lecture on the subject of women’s art at the University of Sydney. Later, she toured Australia and came to Perth to give this lecture at UWA. In addition to the university lectures, Lippard held informal lectures and studio visits. One of her informal lectures took place at Praxis but unfortunately there are no records of Lippard’s topic on that occasion. One can infer, however, that she had much to say of interest to the artists and public who frequented Praxis. She was then in the middle of a very productive period in her long and illustrious career having just published *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, an important book documenting the emergence of the diverse practices labelled as conceptual art. Praxis was to become the place to see and discuss these new art practices. A landmark in the history of art in Perth, its opening signalled the profound change that was underway in the 1970s when the predominance of painting started to decline and a new generation of artists began to explore different media. I would suggest that the intellectual ambition, the experimental disposition, of the emerging generation had much to do with the professional training and opportunities made available by the reform of the educational system in the 1960s, in particular by the establishment of the Department of Art and Design at WAIT.

4. The Artists and the Exhibitions

Among the numerous exhibitions that took place in Perth in 1975, I focus on five that illustrate the direction of the changes taking place in the local art scene. I consider, first, three exhibitions that featured the work of the best-recognised painters of the time Guy Grey-Smith, Robert Juniper and George Haynes. By this stage Juniper and Haynes had established enduring relations with the Skinner Galleries, where they held solo exhibitions on an annual basis. The commercial and critical success of their exhibitions suggests that late modernist painting was still the preferred kind of art in the local market. However, the predominance of the modernist aesthetic was about to be overturned and 1975 would be the last year that Juniper and Haynes showed at the Skinner Galleries, for the venue which did the most to promote Australian modernism in Perth was about to close its doors.

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The other two exhibitions that I discuss in this section presented the new type of art emerging in Perth in the 1970s. Staged at venues that were attracting an audience for innovative art, the OFSG and Praxis, these exhibitions included the conceptual work of Miriam Stannage and the experimental practices of Brian Blanchflower.

I indicated in the previous chapter that Robert Juniper was producing abstract works and stylised landscapes in 1962, but the local critics concentrated their praise on his landscapes. From 1963, he painted almost exclusively abstracted landscapes that evoked the outback regions of Western Australia. According to author Christine Sharkey, Juniper found the inspiration for this type of regional imagery in the paintings of Sidney Nolan. He was keenly aware of Nolan’s critical acclaim as representative of an Australian School that expressed the national identity. Juniper had the opportunity to study closely the paintings Nolan exhibited at Skinner Galleries in 1962, but he did not study them in terms of a style he could follow. Rather, and more importantly for his project, he saw them as the example of a body of work that revealed the character of a place.

By 1975, Juniper was regarded as “one of Western Australia’s best known painters.” His exhibition at Skinner Galleries included almost exclusively landscapes that were not that different to the landscapes he showed in the 1960s, especially with respect to his use of colour (Figs 2.11, 3.15 and 3.16). Reviewing Juniper’s 1975 exhibition, the two local critics Cedric Baxter and Murray Mason noted with approval his subtle colours. They turned to the work that impressed both the most East

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487 Ibid. Sharkey’s observations and claims were based on the interviews she conducted with Robert Juniper in 1986.
488 Ibid., 247-48.
489 Ibid., 254.
Wind (Fig 3.15) to illustrate their point. Lennonville (Fig 3.16) is another example of the abstracted style Juniper had developed by the mid-1970s. It was characterised by a somewhat loser brushwork when compared to his paintings of the early 1960s (Fig 2.11), but it was essentially similar in its treatment of the natural environment and in the effective use of colour to evoke a particular mood. The view that Juniper’s manner of painting had remained virtually static since the 1960s is confirmed by Mason’s assessment of the work on display in 1975. The critic praised the consistency of Juniper’s established style and wrote approvingly of finding only “gentle suggestions of change.” The appreciation of Juniper’s mature style by the Perth public has ensured the continued popularity of his abstracted landscapes, which is evident in the number and range of publications dedicated to Juniper’s oeuvre - four monographs and a PhD dissertation – that confirms his position as one of the best-known Western Australian artists.

Fig 3.16 Robert Juniper, Lennonville, 1975, oil on canvas board, 47 x 71 cm, ECU Art Collection, exhibited: Recent Paintings by Robert Juniper, Skinner Galleries, 1975, cat. 7

The last solo exhibition George Haynes held at the Skinner Galleries was also well-received by the local critics. Haynes, who started to exhibit in 1962, came to early prominence in the 1970s when he was the only Western Australian represented in the exhibition Ten Australians that toured Europe in 1974-75 under the auspices of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. At the end of its European tour, Ten Australians was staged at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and television documentaries were screened about each of the artists included in it, thus adding to Haynes’s

492 Mason, “Variations in Colour by Two Artists.”
Both Mason and Baxter wrote admiringly about the work Haynes showed in 1975, with the former commending the powerful colours used by the artist. The portrait Juniper (Fig 3.17) is an example of the importance of colour in the construction of Haynes’s paintings. In this case, he defines the character of the sitter mostly through the strong colouring.

Haynes’s work was comparable to that of his predecessors, Grey-Smith and Juniper. Just like them, he trained in Great Britain, where he attended the Chelsea School of Art between 1958 and 1962. At that time, Pop Art and hard-edge abstraction were emerging as British avant-garde styles but they were practised by a small group of artists with affiliations to the Independent Group, the Central School of Arts and the Royal College of Arts. Most artists were still working in the colourful style derived from School of Paris abstraction that had just started to appear when Grey-Smith and Juniper trained in Britain during the early post-war years. Hence it is not surprising to find that the local critics identified the handling of colour as a common trait they admired in these three painters. In a way, the three developed their own form of the British mild modernism which resulted from the attempt at revitalizing British painting after World War II, but without breaking with all the conventions of the past.

Guy Grey-Smith was undoubtedly the Perth artist held in the highest local and national regard in 1975. His exhibition, held at the OFSG, was part of the Festival of Perth a fact that indicates the recognition he had achieved given that Festival exhibitions were prestigious events. An additional mark of his standing was the commission of a Guy Grey-Smith retrospective by the Visual Arts

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499 It is questionable whether the intention of producing a new kind of art while not completely breaking with the conventions of the past can be considered as a ‘modernist’ project in any meaningful way, since modernism has implied a wilful discarding, or superseding, of the norms and constraints of the past.
The first major retrospective ever organised at WAAG, it opened in 1976 and the catalogue published to accompany it remains the best-documented scholarly publication on Grey-Smith. Critic Murray Mason recognised a career that spanned more than twenty five years by referring to Grey-Smith as the doyen of local painters in his enthusiastic review of the works on display at the OFSG. Mason’s admiration for the way Grey-Smith continued to create works in his “established and expected style” speaks of a style that had stopped to evolve by this stage. After his explorations of School of Paris abstraction in the 1960s, Grey-Smith had distilled a distinctive style, which Mason described in terms of heavily-bladed strong colours, powerfully-guided textures and reduction of compositional statements to essentials. Dry North (Fig 3.18) shows the style traits described by Mason.

Fig 3.18 Guy Grey-Smith, Dry North, 1975, oil and beeswax emulsion on gauze over hardboard, 80 x 92.5 cm, Janet Holmes à Court Collection

The importance the Perth critics of the 1970s accorded to the use of colour in the paintings of Guy Grey-Smith, Robert Juniper and George Haynes points to commonly accepted criteria to evaluate art in terms of specific formal traits and is evidence that abstracted representations using colour expressively, rather than descriptively, had superseded naturalistic landscapes as the most valued form of art in Perth. But the formalist criteria, typical of late modernism, which had already been challenged in the artistic centres of North America and Europe was about to be questioned in Perth.

501 Lou Klepac and Guy Grey-Smith, Guy Grey-Smith Retrospective. Subsequent publications on Grey-Smith have updated the information on his oeuvre, but none has presented research into each painting included in it as Klepac’s catalogue did.
503 Ibid.
504 Ibid.
too. Two significant exhibitions marked this turning point in 1975. One presented work by Miriam Stannage at the OFSG and the other was the first *Praxis Group Show* at the eponymous gallery.

Largely self-taught, Stannage began exhibiting in 1965. She was awarded a residency at the Power Institute Studio in Paris after winning the 1970 Albany Art Prize, which was judged by Bernard Smith then director of the Power Institute of Fine Arts. During her stay in Paris, Stannage was exposed to a range of art from many periods and countries, from Italian Renaissance to Japanese prints and German Surrealism, as well as to a variety of contemporary trends such as Pop, Kinetic and Minimalist Art. The effect was liberating, in a way, it modified Stannage’s professional habitus. As discussed in subsection 2.3, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as a cognitive construction of reality encompasses the range of possibilities the participants in the artistic field are prepared to envisage. For Stannage, her experiences in Paris opened the door to infinite possibilities. As she put it: “The most important thing I have learned here is that I have been freed from the thought of art being only a rectangle covered with paint or pencil, absolutely anything can be used!”

Years of experimentation ensued as ideas became central to her practice and she felt free to employ whatever materials and techniques suited her ends.

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507 Ibid.
509 Ibid., 14.
patterns. In *Mondrian on Art* (Fig 3.19), the colours of the lines of text create a vibrating grid effect on a white background. Despite its allusions to Op Art and to Piet Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, this is not a purely abstract painting given that the text consists of excerpts from Mondrian’s writings on art. Thus the painted/written surface literally refers to itself, suggesting a wry comment on the notion of abstraction. The use of text by conceptual artists such as the American John Baldessari, the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers and the Australian Ian Burn was well-known in contemporary art circles by the time Stannage stayed in Paris.\(^5\) However the perplexity expressed by the critics who reviewed her exhibition in the daily press suggests that this was, quite probably, the first occasion the Perth public encountered such practice.\(^5\)

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510 Foster et al., *Art since 1900*, 576-577 and 593-594; Burn, *Dialogue*, 195-196.

In the works framed as *trompe l’oeil* Kodak transparencies (Figs 3.20 and 3.21), Stannage proceeded with her examination of the notion of representation by deploying strategies such as the juxtaposition of painted images and real objects. The very prominent frames acted as reminders to the viewers that they were looking into a subjective construction of the world, despite the accuracy of the hand-made representations. Critic Patrick Hutchings located his interpretation of the Kodachrome series in the context of conceptual art. For him, the obvious frames announced that these compositions were highly reflexive statements about painting.\footnote{Hutchings described the Kodachrome series as extremely acute visual comments on the complex relationships between object and image. In his opinion, Stannage’s enlightening visual statements were particularly useful in Perth, where many members of the public thought that art was the equivalent of a big, hand-made photo.}

Stannage’s visual statements on the relationship between the painted surface and meaning can be found even in the couple of abstract-looking paintings that completed her 1975 exhibition. For instance, *International Code of Signals* (Fig 3.22) might be considered at first glance as an example of pure geometric abstraction. Yet, it displays a text with a definite meaning for viewers able to read the International Code of Signals. For those who understand the code, the artist wrote: “This is a painting of the International Code of Signals painted by M. Stannage.” One could generalise her comments to say that beyond pleasing appearances, artists create meaningful works for those who have the codes to read their visual messages.

\footnote{Patrick Hutchings, “Miriam Stannage, Kodakist,” Westerly 20, no. 3 (1975): 53.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid., 54-55.}
Stannage’s conceptual practice was uncommon in Perth in 1975. Her exhibition marked a clear break with the ever dominant motif in Western Australian art, the landscape. Not only was the treatment of the natural environment absent as a theme among the works she showed at the OFSG, her visual statements brought into question the unexamined assumptions underpinning naturalistic representation. The mere change in iconography and the paths it opened would have made this a memorable exhibition even if the themes and ideas explored had not been as important as they were. The critical reception of Stannage’s conceptual work of 1975 showed that she was on her way to become an important figure in the local art scene, supported by the same UWA academics that had helped to cement the reputation of the modernist figures of the 1960s.

The other significant exhibition of the year, the first Praxis Group Show, unfortunately, has not been well documented mainly because it was organised by a group of young WAIT artists who, unlike Miriam Stannage, did not attract much critical attention at that stage. It was not even mentioned in the press and it is quite doubtful that a catalogue ever existed. Yet, David Bromfield’s research into the work of Brian Blanchflower has made it possible to establish the paintings he exhibited in the first Praxis Group Show.515 Blanchflower, one of the founding members of Praxis, is the best-known artist connected with this group.

After arriving in Perth in 1972, Blanchflower held his first solo exhibition, *Space-Scape*, at the OFSG in 1974. The title of the exhibition tells much about the themes the painter was exploring then. According to Bromfield, Blanchflower worked on the “interdependent ideas of journeys into the outer cosmos and into the inner self” during his first few years in Perth.516 At this stage, he was experimenting with a form of abstraction that Bromfield compared to the colour-field paintings of New York artist Jules Olitski.517 Both artists sprayed acrylic paint on canvas to create a nebulous effect on a seemingly translucent surface. Blanchflower’s *Helios Probe* (Fig 3.13) is an example of this treatment of the painted surface to suggest the idea of outer space. Appearances apart, the critic made clear that there was very little in common between the aims of the two painters.518 Olitski was exploring the medium-specific problem of colour, whereas Blanchflower was searching for a visual metaphor to convey his ideas of outer space.

Geological processes and their effects in shaping the environment were another type of natural phenomena that interested Blanchflower. By 1975, he was experimenting with a technique to

515 David Bromfield, *Brian Blanchflower* (Nedlands, W.A.: Department of Fine Arts, University of Western Australia, 1989). This volume includes a catalogue *raisonné* of Blanchflower’s oeuvre up to 1989.
516 Ibid., 33.
517 Ibid. Jules Olitski, part of the second generation of New York painters, is best-known for his colour-field works of the 1960s.
518 Ibid.
produce surfaces that show marks similar to those left by natural processes - floods or erosion, for instance. The rough texture of As Crow Flies (Fig 3.23) was achieved by pouring a mix of acrylic paint and coloured sand grit over the canvas several times until the mix dried. These experiments would lead in the direction of performance art later in the decade. I come back to Blanchflower’s outdoor performances in Chapter Four.

Fig 3.23 Brian Blanchflower, As Crow Flies, 1975, acrylic on flax canvas and extraneous material, 179 x 115 cm, Private Collection, exhibited: Praxis Group Show, Praxis, 1975

Most of Blanchflower’s paintings of the mid-1970s explored and represented sublime aspects of nature such as infinite distances, either in space or in geological time. Consequently, they fitted well within the local tradition as they continued, albeit in an updated form, the Western Australian focus on the natural environment. But after the opening of the Praxis gallery in 1975, Blanchflower became one of the main organisers of the group’s activities and for the rest of the decade, his practice - encompassing painting, installations and performance art - could best be described as experimental.

5. Aboriginal Art and Artists

The conceptual work of Miriam Stannage and the experimental practices of the members of Praxis show to what extent the younger generation of Perth artists were aware of and engaging with the critical discourses that questioned the assumptions of modernism. For Aboriginal artists this questioning opened new possibilities. Art historian Ian McLean has argued that it was the rupture with the logic of modernism, in particular with discourses opposing the modern and the ‘primitive,’

519 Bromfield, Brian Blanchflower, 36.
520 Ibid.
that made possible for Aboriginal art to be accepted as contemporary. A number of modernist artists sought inspiration in the art of Indigenous peoples characterising it, regardless of any admiration for its aesthetic accomplishments, as the expression of a ‘primitive,’ or arrested, stage of cultural development that allowed creativity to manifest itself unconstrained by the norms of civilization. For the holders of primitivist assumptions, the modern art of ‘civilized’ peoples advanced constantly while it was in the nature of the authentic art of Indigenous peoples to remain static, untouched by, or perhaps unaware of, the preoccupations of the contemporary world, hence the corollary: it was not possible for Aboriginal art to be authentic and contemporary at the same time.

Although notions of ‘primitivism’ varied widely around the world, in the Australian art world views of the kind described above went essentially unchallenged until the 1960s when a few practising artists began to advocate for the exhibition and collection of Aboriginal art by the public art galleries. At about the same time, decades of Aboriginal activism culminated in the passing of the 1967 Referendum, which marked the onset of a move towards an ever-elusive postcolonial future. In this social climate, the Whitlam Government came to power with a reformist agenda that, as discussed in subsection 1.1, assigned the arts a central role in the promotion of cultural change. The new Government’s agenda also envisaged a change from a policy of assimilation to one of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs. The establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB), in 1973, was an important step in this direction. The new organisation was generously funded by the Commonwealth Government and its members were all Aboriginal Australians. The strategies the AAB started to put in place in the 1970s were among the main factors that finally brought about the acceptance of a certain kind of Aboriginal art as part of the contemporary scene in the 1980s.

The AAB’s strategies promoted Aboriginal art both for the much-needed economic revenue it could bring as a community development enterprise and as a way of reaffirming the vitality of Aboriginal cultures. If the art of tribal societies was defined by certain modernist discourses as archaic and static, the ideology of settler colonialism predicted the extinction of their cultures. Colonialism

521 McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 18, 32.
522 Foster et al., Art since 1900, 186, 263, 371.
523 Tony Tuckson, deputy director at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and WAAG director Frank Norton are notable examples of practising artists who promoted Aboriginal art. The former organised touring exhibitions and the latter began to acquire Aboriginal art for the State Art Collection in the 1960s. McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 26; Croft and AGWA, Indigenous Art, 8.
524 Myers, Painting Culture, 130.
525 Ibid.,139; McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 32.
526 For the sake of clarity, I treat the ideologies of modernism as constant progress that emerged in the mid-19th century and the form of colonialism that developed in Australia in the same century as independent factors in the reception of Aboriginal art. Yet at an epistemological level they can be seen as interdependent
took different forms in each country where it occurred. In settler colonies, such as Australia, groups of Europeans made their home by dispossessing and eventually outnumbering the Indigenous inhabitants. Building on anthropologist Patrick Wolfe’s study of settler colonialism, art historian Damian Skinner identifies as the central dynamic that distinguishes settler colonialism from other forms of colonialism a focus on the land that necessitates the elimination of its indigenous population. The natives, however, did not disappear despite being the subject of practices such as expulsion, incarceration and assimilation. Since physical eradication proved unattainable, discursive elimination took the form of predicting the disappearance of ‘primitive’ and dying Indigenous cultures which, in the settlers’ narrative, would be superseded by the progressive European culture.

It was in this context that Aboriginal activism intensified in the 1970s and the AAB took on the responsibility for “encouraging and reviving pride in, and knowledge of, Aboriginal culture by assisting the best professional work to emerge in the arts among Aboriginal people.” The Board initially focused on cultural products from remote centres channelling them, either as traditional or contemporary, to different segments of the market. It sold objects that could be described as traditional, for instance bark paintings, in the outlets owned by Aboriginal Arts and Crafts in the main Australian cities. This company, funded through the AAB to wholesale and retail aboriginal artefacts, aimed at fostering the economic development of remote communities and raising the profile of Aboriginal people in the cities. Additionally, the AAB increasingly promoted the acrylic paintings from the Western Desert as contemporary art by organising touring exhibitions that targeted art galleries in Australia and overseas.

The AAB was very active in Perth in 1975. Through its commercial arm, Aboriginal Arts and Crafts, it opened the Traditional Aboriginal Art Gallery in the city centre and appointed Mary Macha, an ex-project officer with the W.A. Native Welfare Department, as its manager. In line with the goals of

components of the same worldview or episteme that originated in the European enlightenment. On this subject see Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970).

Thomas, Possessions, 9.


Ibid., 135-136.

Myers, Painting Culture, 136, 141.

Ibid., 135. The idea for Aboriginal Arts and Crafts originated in a tourism plan for Central Australia and its funding was specifically destined to the marketing of artefacts from remote communities.

Ibid., 186, 194.

“The Other Side of Warburton,” Daily News, 17 October, 1975. Years later, Macha’s expertise would be instrumental in the successful marketing of Aboriginal art from the Kimberley region.
Aboriginal Arts and Crafts, the new gallery sold artefacts from remote communities among them bark paintings from Arnhem Land and objects, “crafts” according to Macha, from Western Australian centres such as Warburton. In the same year, the AAB arranged for the exhibition Art of the Western Desert to be seen at UWA’s Undercroft Gallery and then in the Architecture building at WAIT. Art of the Western Desert comprised thirty paintings in acrylics by artists based at Papunya. The organisers of the exhibition emphasised the up-to-date qualities of these paintings by presenting them as interpretations “in a modern two-dimensional medium” of tribal legends and myths.

Since Aboriginal art made in urban centres was not a priority of the AAB, it did not have a place in its promotional strategies in the 1970s. Nevertheless Noongar art made in Perth benefited indirectly from the Board’s funding. In 1975, it was shown in two events supported by the AAB to mark Aboriginal Week. A report in the press described the events as displays of “utensils, weapons and paintings” staged at the Aboriginal Advancement Council Centre and the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship headquarters. The paintings in these displays were created by artists associated with the Carrolup School discussed in Chapter Two. In light of the descriptions of the mixed displays and the charitable nature of the organisations where they were installed, it would appear that the Noongar paintings were exhibited and traded outside the boundaries of the artistic field as crafts of a relatively low status.

Revel Cooper was the best known of the painters represented in the events supported by the AAB. By this stage Cooper, who had been exhibiting locally and in Victoria for over twenty years, had definite views on Aboriginal rights. In the mid-1950s he was employed by activist and artist Bill Onus in Victoria. Onus served as Victorian director of the Aboriginal Referendum movement and became the first Aboriginal president of the Aborigines Advancement League (Victoria) in 1967. With the assistance of the League, Cooper exhibited regularly in Victoria during the 1960s, gaining some critical recognition there. Contact with the Victorian organisations might have contributed to

536 Mason, “The Dreamtime Myth in Paint.”
537 Myers, Painting Culture, 135; McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 56-57. This policy changed after 1983, when the AAB began supporting the initiatives of urban-based Aboriginal artists.
541 Kleinert, “Cooper, Revel Ronald (1934-1983).”
form Cooper’s views on Aboriginal claims, which he put in writing in 1968. On the terrible toll of colonisation, he wrote:

Firstly, the Aboriginal was deprived of everything, his country, the freedom to live his chosen way of life. But the greatest and most depressing loss of all was the loss of man’s greatest and most treasured asset, the possession of pride.  

Aware of the importance of Aboriginal land rights for cultural survival, he added: “I do believe that by returning parts of this country to its first inhabitants, one would return the pride, courage and initiative of a proud and humble race of people.” It is not clear, though, to what extent these ideas informed his artistic practice but in any case Cooper’s almost exclusive concentration on depicting the Noongar country, his ancestral land, suggests that he was reaffirming his links to this particular place. It is quite possible to read his paintings along the lines of curator Daniel Thomas’ interpretation of the watercolours of Albert Namatjira. Thomas wrote: “we now cannot but see Namatjira’s paintings as a way of reaffirming his tribal territorial knowledge while simultaneously sharing with outsiders his pride in his land’s great beauty.” Similarly, McLean saw in the deployment of the conventions of the picturesque landscape a form of agency that enabled the Noongar painters of the Carrolup School to “pictorially possess and claim the land.”

It is not a coincidence that neither the paintings of the Carrolup School nor those of Namatjira’s Hermannsburg School received much attention from the AAB. They were too similar to the regional landscapes predominant in Australia in the inter-war years up until the 1940s and sometimes derisively called the Gum Tree School. It is important to note that even though the ultimate acceptance as contemporary fine art of the abstract canvases from the Western Desert depended, as McLean argues, on the rejection of the primitivist tenets of modernism, the manner in which this type of Aboriginal art was promoted in the 1970s shows that the AAB, and its professional advisors, subscribed to the standard account of Australian modernism. In the best-known version of the history of Australian art, the landscapes of the Gum Tree School were characterised as conservative, as the antithesis of progressive or modernist art. Since the AAB intended to establish the relevance of Aboriginal art in the contemporary scene, it made sense to foreground the formal

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542 Revel Cooper, “To Regain our Pride,” Aboriginal Quarterly 1, no. 3 (1968): 20.
543 Ibid.
544 Daniel Thomas quoted in Ian Burn, Dialogue, 61.
546 Burn, Dialogue, 39, 61.
qualities of Western Desert painting to substantiate such claims rather than showcasing paintings associated with a discredited landscape tradition. In the case of Noongar painting, the affinities with the regional imagery popular in the inter-war years are so evident that McLean has called it the Carrolup Gum Tree School.548

![Fig 3.24 Revel Cooper with some of his paintings at the Perth Aboriginal Centre, 11 July 1975, photograph by Brian Gordon](image)

A look at the work of Revel Cooper in the 1970s confirms how similar his paintings had become to those of the so-called Gum Tree School, which were essentially the sort of naturalistic landscapes favoured by the Western Australian public for most of the past century (Figs 1.3 and 1.5). In the photograph taken at the Aboriginal Advancement Council Centre (Fig 3.24), the artist is holding two

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table-tops made by Aboriginal inmates at Fremantle prison. By comparing one of Cooper’s table-tops of the 1970s (Fig 3.25) to his 1962 South-West Landscape near Pemberton (Fig 2.21), it is possible to identify subtle changes in the direction of a more naturalistic representation. For instance, the simple and clear outlines of the early work are softened by more careful modelling, the very obvious symmetrical composition of the 1962 painting is less evident in the later one and the colour scheme became more restrained.

For all their popular appeal, however, this kind of painting was not accepted as part of the local, or the Australian, artistic field. As seen in the previous section, the dominant criteria of evaluation was shifting from the formalist tenets of modernism, which had consecrated artists such as Guy Grey-Smith and Robert Juniper, towards the more intellectually-based appreciation of the new practices emerging artists were exploring in the 1970s, such as conceptual art and installations. The Noongar landscapes had little to do with either. Their reassessment as fine art would have to wait for a change in the cultural climate until the last decade of the twentieth century.

6. Conclusions

In chapters One and Two, I followed the gradual opening of the Perth art scene to new ideas and practices that culminated with the development and recognition of a local version of modernism in the 1960s. This chapter explored the moment when the predominance of modernism began to wane and emerging Perth artists turned their attention towards the novel approaches to artmaking which appeared in response to the critical scrutiny of the modernist paradigm in Europe and North America from the late 1950s.

Among the most important factors that set the stage for the changes observed in 1975 was the implementation of Government policies in two key cultural areas, the restructuring of the higher education system and the promotion of the arts. In the reformed education system, art training was transferred to technical institutes, or colleges of advanced education, provided with the autonomy and the resources needed to form artists in an academic atmosphere that privileged professional standards recognised by peers. In Bourdieu’s terms, this kind of training transmitted the dispositions, the habitus, that encouraged critical engagement with the new approaches to artmaking mentioned above. In Perth, the effects of the new training arrangements were most evident in sculpture. The hiring of British sculptors, familiar with cutting-edge international trends,
as teachers by the then newly established WAIT set the basis for the development of local sculpture as an experimental practice that would eventually expand beyond the register of the object to encompass installations, performance and other non-traditional art practices discussed in the two subsequent chapters.

Concerning the promotion of the arts, a reformist left-of-centre Commonwealth Government advanced an agenda of inclusivity, diversity and innovation mainly through the Australia Council that channelled resources to the funding of crucial structures such as non-commercial spaces for experimental art and the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB). The latter was the concrete outcome of a policy of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs embraced for the first time by an Australian Government. After its establishment in 1973, the AAB pursued the double goal of cultural revival and the economic development of remote communities. Its promotional strategies ensured the continued international success of Aboriginal art from remote centres, particularly those located in the Western Desert, but they did not extend to urban centres, such as Perth, in a significant way until the 1980s. Additionally, the Board’s modernist emphasis on the formal features of the abstract-looking art it promoted was at odds with an endorsement of the regional imagery painted by Perth-based Noongar artists. Their depictions of the Noongar country can be read today, from a postcolonial perspective, as affirmations of an identity tied to the land but for the agents of the artistic field in the 1970s they were too similar to the naturalistic landscapes of the derisively labelled Gum Tree School, which was characterised then as the epitome of conservatism and backwardness.

Modernist landscapes, however, were still the preferred art form in Perth in 1975. This is made clear by the commercial success of the exhibitions held by the best known artists of the time Guy Grey-Smith (Fig 3.18), Robert Juniper (Figs 3.15 and 3.16) and George Haynes. They exhibited paintings treating almost exclusively the natural environment in an abstracted style that had remained virtually unchanged for over a decade. Yet a move away from modernism was gathering momentum and starting to become visible in the work of emerging artists such as Miriam Stannage (Fig 3.20), Brian Blanchflower (Fig 3.23) and the other members of the Praxis group. They showed conceptual art, installations and paintings created using non-conventional techniques and materials.

The extraordinary number of commercial galleries operating in Perth in 1975 and the large number of art collections which had their beginnings around that time suggest the existence of a complex market where art was traded as commodity. Partly in reaction to such situation, a group composed mainly of graduates and staff of WAIT’s Department of Art and Design formed the collective Praxis. One of the most significant events of 1975, although almost unnoticed at the time, was the
establishment of an alternative gallery by the Praxis group with the declared intention of running an experimentally-oriented organisation capable of providing facilities for artistic exploration. The founding of this experimental venue, which arguably was highly influential in determining the direction art took in Perth, can be seen as one more outcome of the possibilities opened by the new dispositions, or habitus, disseminated by the training of artists within the system of higher education.

If the Perth art scene was much larger and complex in 1975 compared to that of 1962, there was one element that had nearly disappeared, art criticism. It reverted to the situation of the 1950s when the daily press was the sole outlet for art writing. Perth, however, was not an exception, given that similar conditions prevailed around the country. This state of affairs improved in the 1980s when the end of the economic crisis ushered in a period of extraordinary economic growth in Western Australia that fostered the expansion of the art scene and the flourishing of local art writing. These events are the subject of Chapter Four.

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550 “Praxis Submission to the Community Arts Committee of the Australia Council,” April 1975.
CHAPTER FOUR: In the State of Excitement, 1987

Chapter Three examined the circumstances that led to the end of the dominance of late-modernist art in Perth and to the appearance of the first signs of new approaches to artmaking. The possibilities announced in 1975 became realities in the 1980s. This chapter studies the postmodern Perth art scene in 1987, arguably the moment when it reached its peak both in terms of activity and of the diversity of types and styles of art produced. One of the most important factors propelling the extraordinary blossoming of the visual arts up to 1987 was the considerable amount of financial resources channelled to the cultural sphere. The reach of economic forces into all aspects of cultural life was a global phenomenon that I outline in the first section of the chapter to place the events observed in Perth in context. Building on Fredric Jameson’s concept of the postmodern as a cultural period shaped by the expansion of capitalism, I highlight in particular the interactions of the economic and artistic fields. Then I proceed to explore the most salient aspects of the local art scene in 1987. In this case, I structure my survey by adapting Jameson’s view of the postmodern as a force field in which residual and emergent forms of cultural production coexist. Although I concentrate mostly on emergent postmodernist practices, modernism did not disappear completely and has persisted, especially in painting, up to the present century.

I consider the construction of a regional art historical narrative in Section 4, through the examination of three ground-breaking exhibitions presented at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). By 1987, AGWA had become a leading agent in the artistic field, but the most progressive forms of experimental art were shown at the artist-run venue Praxis. The section on exhibitions also explores the installation work of Carol Rudyard as a notable example of the kind of art seen at Praxis. In Section 5, I discuss the increased recognition of Aboriginal art in the 1980s in the context of the debates sparked by the planning of the contested celebration of the Australian Bicentennial in 1988. Although locally-made Aboriginal art did not achieve the same visibility as art from remote centres, it nevertheless started to be accepted as part of the Perth art scene. I look at two types of images produced by Perth-based Aboriginal artists, the politically-oriented work of Palyuku artist and writer Sally Morgan and the landscapes of Noongar artist Shane Pickett.
1. Postmodernism, the Economic Field and the Artistic Field

The 1980s were years of extraordinary economic activity supported by the free-market policies that conservative governments championed in countries around the world. In the artistic field, the reactionary turn in politics coincided with the appearance of a range of practices either complementing or opposing it. Those practices also reflected conflicting views on the role of postmodernist art, that is, art produced after the ending of the modernist period. On the side complementing the conservative political climate, some postmodern artists attempted a return to old traditions, such as figurative representation. They opposed the predominantly intellectual and critical approaches of modernist and conceptual art. On the other side, a number of artists reacted against what they perceived as the lack of critical edge in late-modernism by seeking to deconstruct the narratives sustaining its ideology. Both positions underline the complex relationships among the political, economic and artistic fields. Conservative or anti-modernist practices not only reinforced the status quo, they also addressed the market that had been dissatisfied with the demanding art of the 1960s and 1970s, while on the other hand critical postmodernists scrutinised the influence of market forces on cultural production.

In the present context, I refer to postmodernism as a period and not as a style, although my analysis focuses on concrete aesthetic manifestations observed in the Perth art scene of the 1980s. I am building here mostly on Fredric Jameson’s concept of the postmodern as a distinct cultural period. Modernism as a dominant style might have ended by 1960 but the process of modernisation, seen as the ceaseless transformation of modes of production and consumption, transportation and communication, continues up to the present. A leading force behind this process has been the expansion of capitalism. Following Belgian economist Ernest Mandel’s proposition that capitalism has expanded in three stages, Jameson argues that each of them has been characterised by particular conditions or norms in the cultural sphere. Mandel labelled the three moments in the evolution of capitalism as market stage, imperialism and late capitalism. The dominant cultural norms accompanying the late-capitalist stage are what Jameson calls postmodernism. He also refers to this stage as multinational or consumer capitalism for it has involved the expansion of capitalism

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551 Foster et al., Art since 1900, 649; Terry Smith, Australian Painting, 519. The most notable and influential examples of conservative governments of the 1980s were those of the United States, Great Britain and Germany. Even in Australia, governed by a nominally left-of-centre party during the best part of the 1980s, economic policies moved decidedly towards a liberalism that favoured the rule of market forces.

552 Foster et al., Art since 1900, 640.


554 Ibid.
to a global scale and into areas of social life hitherto un-commodified.555 The increasing influence of economic forces on the cultural sphere in the 1980s was evident, for instance, in the extraordinary level of investment in media companies such as newspapers and television channels, in the market system reaching into art-world institutions such as public museums and galleries that became dependant on consumers of spectacular events, and in the acquisition of works of art as investment.556

Other formulations of postmodernism, such as Jean-François Lyotard’s narrative-centred critique, are also relevant for my study.557 However in light of the prominent role the interactions with the economic field played in shaping the local art scene during the 1980s, Jameson’s approach to postmodern culture seems particularly illuminating in the present case. Moreover, his account does not presuppose a clear break between modernism and postmodernism. Rather, he sees the latter as an evolution, an uneven evolution, with some residual forms of cultural production surviving from the modernist period and coexisting with the new forms emerging in the postmodernist period.558 I would suggest that this is a fruitful way to examine the Perth art scene in 1987.

1.1 Perth in 1987: The Excitement of Late Capitalism

One of the defining features of late capitalism, according to Jameson, is its global reach. By contrast during the imperialist stage, capitalism involved competition mostly among a few colonial powers.559 The 1950s marked the transition when technological developments enabled multiple capitalist centres to operate in a worldwide network.560 Perth gradually became one of those centres. By 1987, the city was home to financiers and entrepreneurs at the head of large corporations that invested, locally and internationally, in a wide range of economic sectors from manufacturing to the media and real estate.561

555 Jameson, Postmodernism, 36. Jameson adopts a Marxist position in his cultural critique thus when he writes on the expansion of capitalism, he is not referring solely to increases in the volume and flow of financial resources but also to advances in technologies affecting all areas of cultural production.
556 Foster et al., Art since 1900, 621-622,646-647, 650.
559 Jameson, Postmodernism, xix.
560 Ibid., 1; Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, 3.
561 One of the most notable Perth-based corporations operating globally, the Bell Group had an Australian portfolio comprising transportation, building supplies, entertainment and media companies. In 1985, its international investments included shares in American mining company Asarco, multinational mining company...
The title of this chapter refers to the excitement created by the vast amounts of financial resources that circulated in Western Australia in the 1980s. The State Government, trying to capture the buoyant mood, stamped vehicle licence plates with the line: ‘W.A. State of Excitement.’ One of the most lucrative areas for local capital was the redevelopment of the city centre which required the demolition of old buildings to make room for the glass towers that dominate the cityscape today. Photographs taken during the redevelopment of Forrest Place show the scale of the projects in progress in 1987 (Figs 4.1 and 4.2).

A prominent example of how economic power interacted with the cultural sphere in Perth can be seen in the activities of businessman Robert Holmes à Court. He was the principal shareholder of the Bell Group which had investments in numerous commercial and industrial companies.\(^{562}\) Through these investments, Holmes à Court controlled local newspapers, television channels in Perth and

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562 Mcllwraith, “Holmes à Court, Michael Robert (1937-1990).”
Adelaide, theatres in London and other entertainment companies in Great Britain. The wealthy businessman was also Chairman of the Board of AGWA from 1986 to 1990 and one of the most significant art collectors in Australia in the 1980s.

In addition to aesthetic considerations, Holmes à Court purchased works of art for their investment or exchange value. The way he selected what to acquire sheds light on his goals as collector. Typically, his wife Janet Holmes à Court and the curator of his collection Roderick Anderson recommended acquisitions presumably based on their aesthetic preferences. After financial considerations, the final decision was made by Robert Holmes à Court for whom art was an investment which had to produce a return. His investment decisions had profound effects not only on the local art scene but also at a larger scale. Arguably, his highly publicised purchases of Western Desert painting were among the most important factors that brought Aboriginal art to the attention of the art market in the 1980s. I discuss his acquisitions of locally-made art in subsection 2.1. In his last round of purchases from Sotheby’s and Christie’s in 1988, Holmes à Court spent AUD $35 million in purchasing paintings by Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Berthe Morisot, Maurice de Vlaminck and Vincent van Gogh. He was not, however, the only Perth businessman that invested in art. Alan Bond made headlines around the world with his purchase of Vincent Van Gogh’s *Irises* (1889) for the record sum of USD $53.9 million in 1987. Twenty years after the publication of *The Society of the Spectacle*, the extraordinary interventions of the local financial elite in the art market might have somehow corroborated one of Guy Debord’s theses: “The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”

The Perth examples of interactions between the cultural and economic spheres underscore the similarities in the *modus operandi* of the late capitalist system around the globe, for the actions of the Western Australian financiers were not far from those of other wealthy patrons such as advertising magnate Charles Saatchi, for instance, who cemented his prestige as an art collector in London in the 1980s. In Perth, however, the economic excitement subsided by the end of 1987, when the collapse of the stock market caused a number of bankruptcies and put some of the largest

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563 Ibid.; Kraar, “Australia’s Acquisitive Recluse.”
566 Myers, *Painting Culture*, 199.
570 Foster et al., *Art since 1900*, 646, 732.
companies in a precarious situation. The 1987 financial crisis was the beginning of a slowdown that would last well into the 1990s.

2. The Perth Art Scene at its Peak

The flow of financial resources into the cultural sphere, particularly into the art market, created the conditions for the booming of the visual arts in Perth in the 1980s. Besides the large number of exhibition spaces operating in 1987, the range of art on view had never been so wide. After the opening of its new building in 1979, AGWA began hosting exhibitions of international art in a variety of media on a regular basis; the vibrant commercial sector exhibited mostly Australian modernist paintings, both interstate and local; while alternative spaces showed video art, photographs, installations and the work of emerging painters. This section outlines the characteristics of the most influential agents of the Perth artistic field in 1987.

2.1 Corporate Collectors

As seen in Chapter Three, the number of art collections had increased substantially by 1975 due to the formation of new public collections and the emergence of a generation of individual collectors who joined the ranks of the connoisseurs who had started collecting in the 1950s. Corporate collections, though, were late additions to the local art scene with the first example, the R&I Bank Art Collection, appearing only in 1975, followed by the Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art in 1977. Yet in the following decade when market forces pervaded the cultural sphere in an unprecedented way, corporate collectors became extremely important not only for their financial capital, manifested in their huge purchasing power, but also for their symbolic capital, manifested as prestige associated to their acquisitions and as interest attracted by the spectacle of consumption. Very few people could have known the Perth art market better than co-owner of Galerie Dusseldorf Doug Sheerer. Commenting on the main changes observed in the local market since the opening of Galerie Dusseldorf in 1976, Sheerer pointed to the diminishing participation of individual collectors that accompanied the rise in sales to corporate collectors. The gallerist named the R & I Bank and

571 Gregory, City of Light, 259-268. Gregory offers a detailed account of the WA Inc. case, the criminal investigation into questionable financial dealings amongst businessmen and State Government officials brought to light by the 1987 stock market crash.

Robert Holmes à Court as top examples in the latter group. The Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art, although not named by Sheerer, was also expanding rapidly at the time.

The formation of corporate collections typically has satisfied interrelated goals that straddle the worlds of business and art. For instance, art collections can be deployed to enhance the public image of a corporation or as part of marketing strategies linking the corporation and its products to notions of exclusivity. In the present case, the R & I Bank (today known as Bankwest) stated as one of the main goal of its collection to support the development of Western Australian art. In the 1980s the scope of R & I Bank Art Collection became national but it retained a primary emphasis on local art. Similarly, Wesfarmers Limited claimed that it started its collection of historical art with the aim of fostering “an understanding and awareness of Australia’s history in the wider community.” By 1987, the focus of the Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art was shifting towards contemporary art and today it includes a strong representation of contemporary Aboriginal art. More generally, collections can be developed for their value as investments. Whatever else the local corporate collectors stated as their altruistic motives, the three discussed in this subsection regarded investment value as a key criterion in the selection of the works they purchased. Examples of what was seen as valuable investments in 1987 are the postmodernist figuration of Marcus Beilby’s Tossing the Kip (Fig 4.3) and the residual modernism of Robert Juniper’s Conversation (Fig 4.4).

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572 Ibid.
574 Chapman, The Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia Art Collection, 7.
575 Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art, The Song of the Lamb, 7.
577 Chapman, The Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia Art Collection, 7; Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art, The Song of the Lamb, 7; Edgar, Janet Holmes à Court, 158.
Although the Robert Holmes à Court Collection was the most prestigious of the collections located in Perth, if not in Australia, it is difficult to ascertain to what degree its prestige depended on the publicity surrounding the prices paid for a few works rather than on the quality of its contents.  

Further complicating its assessment is the fact that many of the articles that commented on this collection, usually in glowing terms, appeared in newspapers owned by Holmes à Court. At least for one critic, Sydney-based Terence Maloon, some of the paintings in the collection were “indistinguishable from suburban kitsch and tourist-shop shockers.” Yet regardless of the quality of its holdings, for local artists this was the most significant collection in terms of purchasing power. The patronage of the Holmes à Courts benefited Perth painters at all stages in their careers. Their acquisitions, in 1987, covered the full range from the work of a highly recognised artist such as Brian Blanchflower (Fig 4.5) to that of Rick Vermey (Fig 4.6) who had just graduated from WAIT in 1986. Besides the much-needed economic support, the reputation of the artists was boosted by the prestige of the collection and by the attention attracted by the manner Holmes à Court purchased large numbers of works from a single exhibition, sometimes entire exhibitions. For instance,

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579 It is not clear whether Robert Holmes à Court was the owner of this collection, in a legal sense, or one of the companies he controlled. In any case, as Doug Sheerer’s comments make clear, the members of the Perth scene saw it as a corporate collection. Currently, it is known as the Janet Holmes à Court Collection.


582 Among the Perth-made works that entered the Holmes à Court collection in 1987 were: Red Curtains by Tom Alberts, Sunshine of Our Nightmare Becomes the Winter of Tomorrow as above the City of Plastic Monoliths Relentlessly Rise by Edward Bear, Canopy IV Transfigured Night and Glimpses by Brian Blanchflower, Heritage Il by Julie Crockett, Journey 3 by Chris Fitzallen, The History Book Series by Andrew Hayim, Tower of Babel by Kevin Raxworthy, Expose of Fantastic Myths by Rick Vermey and Conversation Piece by David Watt.
Vermey’s painting (Fig 4.6) was part of a lot of six bought from the exhibition Believing Room, which comprised a total of twelve works.\textsuperscript{583}

Fig 4.5 Brian Blanchflower, Glimpses (An Earth History), 1986-1987, oil on acrylic gesso on polyester/cotton canvas, 189 x 658 cm, Janet Holmes à Court Collection

Fig 4.6 Rick Vermey, Expose of Fantastic Myths, 1987, three panels, acrylic on canvas, 160 x 115 cm each panel, Janet Holmes à Court Collection, exhibited: Believing Room, Large Scale Paintings, The Beach Gallery, 1987, cat. 10

An important aspect of corporate collections, pioneered in Perth by the Holmes à Court Collection, has been their display as complements to public collections. Well-researched catalogues accompanied the exhibitions Early Western Australian Art from the Robert Holmes à Court Collection presented at AGWA in 1983 and Western Australian Art: A Selection of Early Works from the Robert

\textsuperscript{583} Believing Room: Large Scale Paintings, catalogue of the exhibition presented at The Beach Gallery, Northbridge, 8-28 September 1987.
Holmes à Court Collection seen at the Blaxland Gallery in Sydney in 1986. These exhibitions set a precedent for the ones discussed in Section 4 of this chapter. In 1987, fifty-one paintings from the Robert Holmes à Court Collection were shown in Papunya Aboriginal Art at UWA’s Undercroft Gallery (Appendix 6). In addition, one of the collection’s centrepieces, Monet’s Haystack Sun in the Haze was exhibited at UWA as part of the fundraising campaign that supported the building of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery.

2.2 Art Galleries: Residual Modernism and Emergent Postmodernism

Fuelled by the abundance of resources, the number of exhibition spaces multiplied in Perth in the 1980s, as can be seen in Appendix 5. The two most prestigious venues in the commercial sector of the art scene, the Lister Gallery and Galerie Dusseldorf, marketed mainly paintings in styles that can be considered as residual forms of modernism. The Lister Gallery, in particular, was very successful in supplying affluent collectors with paintings by well-known modernists, for example Jeffrey Smart, Charles Blackman and Robert Juniper. Established in 1976, Galerie Dusseldorf gradually built a reputation as the place where critics and informed public alike went to see what was promoted as the best contemporary art Perth had to offer. According to one of its directors, Douglas Sheerer, the goal of this gallery was to show “work of consequence” done by Western Australian artists. The information in Appendix 6 reveals that by 1987 Galerie Dusseldorf was exhibiting mostly the work of mid-career local painters such as Douglas Chambers (Fig 4.7) and Brian McKay (Fig 4.8). This kind of art could hardly be characterised as innovative, progressive or cutting edge for its time. Although in fairness to Sheerer, it must be recognised that he identified the financial imperatives of a commercial gallery as the main obstacle for the staging of more adventurous exhibitions at Galerie Dusseldorf.

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586 The catalogue of the first public exhibition of the Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art includes twelve paintings bought from the Lister Gallery between 1982 and 1987 by the following artists: Charles Blackman, Ray Crooke, Sam Fullbrook, Sali Herman, Robert Juniper, George Lawrence, Lloyd Rees, Jeffrey Smart, Arthur Streeton, Albert Tucker and Brett Whiteley. Wesfarmers Collection of Australian Art, The Song of the Lamb, 64, 71, 72, 82, 90, 92, 95, 109, 113 and 118.
588 Ibid., 35.
Fig 4.7 Douglas Chambers, *Landloper*, 1986-87, oil and bitumen on canvas, 182.2 x 185.2 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA

Fig 4.8 Brian McKay, *Spartan Villa*, 1983, oil and acrylic on canvas, 66.5 x 79 cm, Bankwest Art Collection, exhibited: *Brian McKay*, Galerie Dusseldorf, 1983, cat. 4; *The Work of Brian McKay*, AGWA, 1987, cat. 60

Fig 4.9 Howard Taylor, *Green Figure*, 1987, oil on canvas on board, 121.5 x 82.5 cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, acquired in 2009 from the Robert Holmes à Court Collection who had purchased it from the exhibition *Recent Paintings and Drawings by Howard Taylor*, Galerie Dusseldorf, 1988, cat. 7

One of the most important events of 1987, for the future of Galerie Dusseldorf, was the establishment of a mutually-beneficial commercial relationship with painter and sculptor Howard Taylor. He was then one of the few locals practising a form of abstraction characterised by a minimalist sensibility (Fig 4.9). After two important exhibitions at AGWA, both discussed in section 4,
had established Taylor’s reputation, he began exhibiting almost exclusively at Galerie Dusseldorf.\textsuperscript{589} The support of this gallery was one of the factors that contributed to his recognition as the best-known Perth modernist.

While the commercial sector of the Perth art scene thrived by marketing mainly late-modernist paintings, two alternative venues, Praxis and The Beach Gallery, showcased emerging postmodernist art. Their offerings covered the range from critical to conservative postmodernism. Praxis was the venue for unconventional and experimental practices. Multi-media installations, frequently critical in content, predominated in its programme (Fig 4.10). For its part, The Beach Gallery concentrated on the work of young painters at the beginning of their careers who were attempting a return to figuration, such as Tom Alberts (Fig 4.11).

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Praxis which had started as an independent artist group became a publicly funded entity in 1981.\textsuperscript{590} Yet, it continued to be managed by artists committed to the group’s original goal of addressing art practice and theory in a critical setting.\textsuperscript{591} By 1987, it was a well-established organisation running an alternative gallery and publishing \textit{Praxis M}, the most influential art journal in Western Australia. Moreover, with its increased resources, it expanded the scope of its activities to include recent art from the rest of Australia and overseas thus playing a crucial role in developing an informed audience for the most innovative local artists. Due in part to its success in educating a public for contemporary art, Praxis was in the middle of major changes in 1987 that eventually led to its disappearance when it became part of the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA). Responding to demands for a place dedicated exclusively to contemporary art, the State Government had announced its support for the establishment of PICA in 1986.\textsuperscript{592} After long negotiations, Praxis closed the doors of its Fremantle gallery and amalgamated with PICA in 1988.\textsuperscript{593}

Praxis was certainly not the only organisation that created the conditions for a project such as PICA to become a reality. As seen in Chapter Three, from the 1970s there was support for the notion that contemporary art could foster creativity and innovation. In Perth, the group Media Space produced art at the interface of new technology and critical postmodernism from 1981 to 1986. It was among its members that the idea of PICA originated.\textsuperscript{594} Although Media Space had disbanded by then, a sample of their work was included in the 1987 exhibition \textit{Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties}. I come back to Media Space in the context of my discussion of this exhibition in Section 4.

The other alternative space dedicated to new art of a postmodernist nature, The Beach Gallery, was neither a commercial gallery nor a state-funded art space.\textsuperscript{595} It was started by Curtin University of Technology lecturer Julian Goddard who ran it on behalf of a collective of about twenty recent art graduates.\textsuperscript{596} In the present case, I use the term ‘postmodernism’ to designate what came chronologically after modernism and as a conservative reaction against it.\textsuperscript{597} Many of the artists who showed at The Beach Gallery practised a form of anti-modernism that consisted in going back to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[591] Ibid.
\item[593] Praxis press release, June 1988, Praxis file, AGWA Research Library.
\item[597] Foster et al., \textit{Art since 1900}, 641.
\end{footnotes}
figurative representation. This local variant of postmodern art must be seen in the context of the trends current in Australian and internationally at the time.

The Beach opened with a group exhibition in 1987. One of the participating artists, Trevor Black, described the art on show as “contemporary, brash, arrogant, exciting and urban-street life art.”

Black claimed that this kind of art had recently built a following in Melbourne and Sydney. Indeed, a group of young Melbourne artists achieved some notoriety in the mid-1980s by depicting “inner-city living in a deliberately ‘primitivistic’ manner.” For Terry Smith, their paintings combined two tendencies prevalent in Melbourne, namely an interest in 1950s semi-figuration and a concern with the depiction of life in the city. These tendencies seem to have been present in Perth too and not only among the very young graduates who showed in the inaugural exhibition at The Beach Gallery. The focus on scenes of urban life was perhaps the most visible sign of a break with the late-modernist aesthetic that in Perth had produced mostly abstracted landscapes.

Fig 4.12 Marcus Beilby, *Travelling into the Future*, 1987, 153 x 153 cm, oil on canvas, Private Collection

From the middle of the 1970s, a few emerging artists - notably Ken Wadrop, Marcus Beilby (Fig 4.12) and Ray Beattie - began to depict everyday life in a style known internationally as photorealism. However this group, later known as the ‘High Street studio realists,’ did not achieve the commercial and critical success enjoyed by the generation who graduated from the WAIT Art School in the early 1980s. Painters in this generation, for instance Tom Alberts (Figs 4.11 and 4.16) and Thomas Hoareau (Fig 4.13), also explored the representation of life in the city but in an expressionist style that gravitated towards the deliberately ‘primitivistic’ tendencies identified by Terry Smith in Melbourne. It would appear that they were trying to recover practices current before modernist

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598 Hardcastle, “Have an Art Starter.”
599 Ibid.
600 Terry Smith, *Australian Painting*, 549.
601 Ibid.
abstraction became the norm. Commenting on the work of Tom Alberts, fellow painter Thomas Hoareau wrote:

Choosing to start from scratch rather than continuing perhaps an exhausted modernist aesthetic of painting, Tom paints figures in a fairly naturalistic space, relying on the given situation and the gestures of the figures to communicate intentions. 602

Fig 4.13 Thomas Hoareau, *Couple against the City*, 1987, pastel on paper, 111 x 77 cm, Private Collection

If Hoareau and some of his contemporaries considered modernism an exhausted aesthetic, it is not clear why they sought a way out of this impasse in another, arguably, exhausted aesthetic. In any event, Hoareau shared with many of the painters of his generation an enthusiasm for the work of the artists of the School of London. 603 Although marginal in the international scene, the School of London was nevertheless part of the postmodern revival of figurative painting and as such might have provided relatively recent examples of figurative art for the Perth artists. During his training at WAIT, Hoareau (Fig 4.13) was particularly impressed by the paintings of R. B. Kitaj (Fig 4.14), the artist who coined the term School of London in the 1970s. 604 I am not suggesting that there was a direct link, other than the teaching at WAIT, between the figurative art seen in Perth in the 1980s and the diversity of styles practised by the artists considered part of the School of London. 605 What the local painters had in common with their British-based counterparts was more an attitude of rejection towards modernist abstraction than any particular stylistic traits. Moreover, the group of well-known British painters working in a figurative manner somehow validated the Perth artists’ exploration of alternative ways to express their postmodern sensibility.

603 Sandra Murray, *Oddfellows: The Essence of Contemporary Western Australian Figurative Artists* (Nedlands, W.A.: Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, 1996), 10. The exhibition *Oddfellows* sampled the work of Perth figurative painters who started their careers in the 1980s. According to curator Sandra Murray, enthusiasm for the painters of the School of London was a characteristic shared by most of the thirteen artists represented in the exhibition.
605 Among the artists associated with the School of London are painters as diverse as R. B. Kitaj, Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, Michael Andrews and David Hockney.
2.3 The New Art Gallery of Western Australia

The State Gallery became one of the most important agents shaping developments in the local art scene in the 1980s. It went through so many changes after 1975, when the construction of its new building was announced, that by 1987 it was virtually a different institution. Its name changed to Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) in 1978 and the new premises opened to the public in 1979 (Fig 3.2). The much larger premises, together with an increase in the number of professional staff, enabled AGWA to assume the educational and legitimating functions that public art galleries typically fulfil in the artistic field. The new building made it possible to bring high-quality exhibitions on a regular basis thus improving the Perth public’s access to a large range of art. Whereas touring exhibitions were rare events before 1979, AGWA hosted three in 1987. They went from historical American and European art to a comprehensive Sidney Nolan retrospective. Importantly, the appointment of more professional staff allowed AGWA to increase its research into the history of settler art in Western Australia which, as indicated in Chapter Three, it had started in the 1970s under Senior Curator Lou Klepac. This research would eventually lead to the construction of a local art historical narrative that informed the 1987 exhibitions WA Art and Artists and Among the Souvenirs. I discuss both exhibitions in Section 4.

Besides the changes brought about by the improved facilities, AGWA had a new leadership team in 1987. Businessman Robert Holmes à Court was appointed chairman of the gallery’s Board of Trustees in May 1986 and art expert Betty Churcher as director in March 1987.

Under their leadership, the focus of the gallery’s collection and exhibition policies shifted towards contemporary art, especially contemporary Aboriginal art. This shift was in line with the preferences of Holmes à Court who was known not only as a wealthy investor but also as an avid art collector. According to reports in one of his newspapers, he owned Australia’s largest private collection of Aboriginal art.

The Holmes à Courts started their collection of Western Desert art with the purchase of all the paintings in the 1981 exhibition *Mr Sandman Bring me a Dream* and from 1985 developed an interest in the work of Kimberley painter Rover Thomas. By 1987, they owned thirty-three paintings by Thomas. Similarly, AGWA purchased seventeen paintings by Thomas in 1987, by far the largest group of works to enter the State Art Collection in that year.

For her part, Churcher, AGWA’s new director, declared to the press her intention to build one of Australia’s best collections of contemporary art and endorsed the goal of enlarging the Aboriginal art collection. However, she had a broader vision regarding the role of AGWA in supporting local art and initiated a series of regular exhibitions reviewing in depth the work of mid-career Perth artists. These exhibitions did much to establish the reputation of local artists among a large public. The first of them, *The Work of Brian McKay* (Fig 4.8), opened in November 1987 and is discussed in Section 4.

610 Edgar, *Janet Holmes à Court*, 152-162; Evans, “One from the Art of Robert Holmes à Court.”
613 Records of the Janet Holmes à Court Collection.
2.4 Artist Collectives: Critical and Conservative Postmodernisms

In the mid-1980s, the formation of artist groups became a common phenomenon in Perth when heretofore artist collectives had been rare. The few that had existed, for instance the Perth Society of Artists, functioned mainly as professional and marketing support associations in a period when commercial galleries were scarce. By contrast, commercial galleries were numerous in the 1980s but the growing influence of market forces on the cultural sphere had become a contentious issue by then. According to their relation to the market, the many groups that appeared around this time can be divided roughly into two types. On the one hand, there were organisations, such as Praxis and Media Space, put together by artists with a critical attitude and more interested in experimenting with new forms of artmaking that in finding a market. Many of the artists in these collectives not only eschewed the market, they actively examined and resisted the implications of consumer capitalism. On the other hand, there were more informal groups consisting typically of recent art graduates who shared studios in low-rent premises. These artists organised themselves in collectives primarily as a way of gaining access to the art market.

As seen in subsection 2.2, by 1987 the Praxis group was about to become part of PICA and thus end the period when it successfully ran Perth’s only space for experimental and critical art. However from 1981 to 1986, the number of artists committed to challenging new art was sufficiently large to sustain another group of this type, Media Space. The two organisations worked closely, their goals overlapped to a large extent and a number of artists, for instance painter Brian McKay, were members of both groups. Yet in two fundamental aspects, Media Space was the more radical of the two collectives. It was independently-funded and much more focused than Praxis on exploring new technologies to produce art. Unfortunately due to their experimental approach to practices such as sound or digital art and their rejection of marketable cultural products, very few tangible examples of their artistic production have survived. Nonetheless as indicated in subsection 2.2, the mark of Media Space on the Perth art scene has been enduring, for the project to create PICA can be considered as its most substantial legacy. McKay, who was at the same time a member of Media Space and on the Board of Praxis, had first-hand experience of the ICA in London. Envisaging a

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similar centre for Perth, he worked with another member of Media Space, American photographer Alan Vizents, on the successful proposal to establish PICA.618

The other kind of artist group that became common in the 1980s was formed by recent graduates from the School of Arts and Design at WAIT and from the Claremont School of Art. They found affordable studio and living spaces in the derelict buildings of the Perth CBD, many of which were about to be demolished (Figs 4.1 and 4.2). Six of these groups were established in 1987 alone.619 In terms of membership, the largest of them were the Beach Gallery collective, located on Beaufort Street, and Gotham Studios that still occupies its original premises in the corner of William and James Streets (Fig 4.15). Even though figurative painters predominated in both groups, Gotham Studios was initiated by sculptors Jon Tarry and Stuart Elliot.620

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Fig 4.15 Gotham Studios, corner of William and James Streets, Northbridge, c.1989

Fig 4.16 Tom Alberts, Untitled, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 120.4 x 120.4 cm, Bankwest Art Collection

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618 Luceille Hanley, ed. Brian McKay: Painter (Fremantle, W.A.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991), 80. Although Praxis created the conditions for PICA to succeed, McKay’s project did not find much support within Praxis since it entailed its disappearance.

619 Cinanni and Situation Vacant Group, Situation Vacant, 14-19.

620 Ibid., 33.
The paintings exhibited, in the 1980s, by artists associated to the Beach Gallery and Gotham Studios (Figs 4.11, 4.13, 4.16 and 4.17) can be described as conservative in relation to the contemporaneous art created by the members of Praxis or Media Space. Rejecting decades of abstracted landscapes, they went back to figurative painting to concentrate on the urban environment and the human figure. In the process, they broke with the long-standing local tradition of landscape painting but this was not an isolated development. Rather it can be seen as the local manifestation of a widespread anti-modernist reaction. A similar phenomenon was taking place in Melbourne, as indicated in subsection 2.2. Further afield there was the School of London, the Italian Trans-avantgarde, American Bad Painting and German Neo-Expressionism, to name just a few of the numerous revivals of figurative art that started to emerge from the late 1970s.

With eighty affiliated members, Artemis was the largest artist group in Perth in 1987. But it had little in common with the many groups of young graduates that existed then. An association of women artists of all ages, Artemis pursued a critical agenda that focused on feminist issues, which meant that its involvement with male-dominated groups, such as Praxis and Media Space, was limited. The group’s chief project, to create a register of women artists in Western Australia, was left incomplete when it disbanded in 1990.

Curator Robert Cook considers the artists affiliated to these groups part of the figurative tradition that appeared in Perth in 1980s and 1990s. He interprets their figurative realism as poetic resistance against the “generalising international conceptualisms and abstractions of their time.” Robert Cook, “Lover, Fighter,” Art Monthly Australia 278, (April 2015): 30.

Terry Smith, Australian Painting, 519; Foster et al., Art since 1900, 641.

Cinanni and Situation Vacant Group, Situation Vacant, 31.

The records of the Artemis group (1986-1990) were deposited in the State Archives in 1992. They are kept in the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History, MN 1418, Acc. 4476A.
2.5 Art Criticism: Academics and Critics

The expansion of the Perth art scene in the 1980s was matched by an increase in the number of outlets for art writing. After the nearly total absence of criticism in 1975, the situation had improved markedly by 1987. Three newspapers, *The West Australian*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Western Mail* had regular columns on art while two periodicals dedicated to the visual arts were published locally, the *Fremantle Arts Review* and *Praxis M: The West Australian Journal of Contemporary Art (Praxis M).*\(^{625}\) Published by the Praxis group from 1983, *Praxis M* represented one of the most important additions to the local art scene for it provided a forum for artists, critics, writers and teachers to express their ideas about the contemporary visual arts.\(^{626}\)

*Praxis M* can be seen as part of the generation of art periodicals that brought a critical approach to the examination of art. *October*, published by MIT Press since 1976, is an outstanding example of this type of criticism that examines contemporary art not only from an aesthetic perspective but also, and perhaps more importantly, from a theoretical perspective that takes into account the critical and social context in which art is being produced. It is not a coincidence that intellectually rigorous criticism flourished at a time when radical art practices, leaving behind formal concerns, moved towards the critical examination of social and cultural practices. Pierre Bourdieu, writing on the art that emerged at the end of the 1970s, argued that a new definition of the artist and of artistic work had brought the artist's work closer to that of the “intellectual” and made it more dependent than ever on “intellectual commentaries.”\(^{627}\) For Bourdieu, the change in the definition of the artist and her or his craft did not happen independently of transformations in the artistic field. On the contrary, it went hand in hand with the formation of an unprecedented relationship between the body of interpreters - such as critics, academics and curators - and the work of art.\(^{628}\) In Australia, one the most noticeable changes in the artistic field was the predominance of poststructuralist theory as frame of reference for the interpretation of art during the 1980s.\(^{629}\) According to Terry Smith, critical theory and deconstructive strategies informed both the practice of Australian leading postmodern artists and the writing on art that appeared in journals like *Art & Text*.\(^{630}\) The criticism published in *Praxis M* certainly belonged in this category.\(^{631}\)

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\(^{625}\) *The West Australian* had an arts editor, Mike van Niekerk, and three critics: Murray Mason, Julie Prott and David Bromfield. Leslie Anderson was the art critic at *The Sunday Times* and Ted Snell at *The Western Mail*. *The Fremantle Arts Review* was published by the Fremantle Arts Centre from 1986 to 1996.


\(^{627}\) Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 109.

\(^{628}\) Ibid., 110

\(^{629}\) Terry Smith, *Australian Painting*, 522

\(^{630}\) Ibid., 522 and 527.
Although most of the writing in *Praxis M* dealt with local issues, the journal included timely reviews of national and international events thus providing a context for the understanding and evaluation of Western Australian art. For instance, the article “Documenta 8: Art in the Social Context” gave a well-rounded view of the issues at stake in the 1987 edition of *Documenta*, arguably one of the most important international events for contemporary art. 632 Similarly, the range of interviews published in the journal is evidence of its role in exposing the local audience to diverse points of view. In 1987, the list of interviewees included gallery-owner Doug Sheerer, Perth sculptor David Jones, Sydney-based American photographer Allan Vizents (published posthumously), French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and Italian artist Francesco Clemente. Regarding Perth-made art, *Praxis M* counted among its regular contributors two of the most influential local critics, academics Ted Snell and David Bromfield who were affiliated to the institutions contributing the most to define the Perth art scene. Snell lectured in fine art at Curtin University Art School while Bromfield was director of the Centre for Fine Arts at UWA.

As discussed in Chapter Two, a group of UWA academics had a major role in defining a hierarchy of modernist artists in Perth in the 1960s. However, they were not specialists in visual art, but lecturers in the English Department doubling as art critics out of a personal interest. By contrast, the Centre for Fine Arts was established in 1983 to offer courses on the theory and history of art, which by their nature set the parameters for an informed critique of the visual arts. Before this no courses on Fine Arts had been offered at UWA since 1931. 633 Unsurprisingly, the first director of the Centre, David Bromfield, became the most influential art critic of the 1980s and 1990s in Perth. Supported by the authority of his position in the artistic field as a recognised expert, Bromfield’s pronouncements reached a wide public for in addition to his articles in academic journals, such as *Praxis M*, he also wrote a regular column for the daily press. Yet his most significant contribution to the appreciation of local art was as a historian. Before Bromfield’s appointment to the direction of the Centre for Fine Arts, research into the history of settler Western Australian art had been limited mostly to the work done by curators Lou Klepac and Janda Gooding at AGWA and Roderick Anderson at the Holmes à Court collection. By 1987, Bromfield’s research had produced three well-documented exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues: *Elise Blumann, Paintings & Drawings 1918-1984* (1984), *Aspects of Perth Modernism, 1929-1942* (1986) and *Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the* 631  

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“Eighties” (1987). The latter surveyed contemporary art to present the best work produced in Perth, according to Bromfield’s by then considerably influential opinion.

3. Sculpture and the Expanded Frame

Sculpture was one of the most progressive and innovative art forms practised in Perth in 1975, but the number of exhibitions of what might be characterised as minimalist, abstract sculpture had diminished by 1987. I would suggest that this does not necessarily mean that interest in three-dimensional work had faded among Perth artists but rather that, at least for some of them, their sculptural work had evolved into a postmodernist practice. Once the sculptures of the British New Generation and the American minimalists were placed directly in the viewer’s world, interactions with this world became crucial for their perception. In contrast to the self-contained modernist sculpture, focused only on the conditions of the medium, soon the postmodernist work was not only interacting with the viewer’s world but attempting to modify it. For theoretician Rosalind Krauss, a postmodernist practice is not defined in relation to a given medium but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of terms that determine a cultural situation, for which any medium—photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors or sculpture—might be used. Through the 1970s as sculpture moved away from the independent aesthetic realm, it began to comment on and question the cultural conditions framing the possibilities of art making. When the intention of the work of art is to question rather than tacitly accept the cultural frame within which it exists, any medium or combination of media might be used, as Krauss has underlined. Hence the proliferation of installations where the sculptural object was just one of the elements constructing the meaning of the artwork. This kind of practice, which became common in Perth in the 1980s (Figs 4.10 and 4.18), is exemplified by the installation Extremities by sculptor David Jones.

Fig 4.18 David Jones, Extremities, installation, Praxis Gallery, 1987

634 Bromfield and Blumann, Elise Blumann; Bromfield, ed. Aspects of Perth Modernism; Bromfield, Among the Souvenirs.
Minimalist sculpture, however, did not disappear. It continued as a residual form coexisting with the postmodern installations, just as modernist abstraction did. Indeed the most important public commission of 1987, *Gate II Coalesce* (Fig 4.19) by Claremont School of Art and WAIT graduate Akio Makigawa, can be seen as minimalist in its simplicity and its emphasis on repetition of geometric forms. At the same time, Makigawa’s huge marble sculpture is also a site-specific intervention marking the entrance to the Perth Cultural Centre.\(^{636}\) Besides minimalist sculpture and installations, the range of three-dimensional work in the 1980s encompassed the figurative sculpture practised by a few artists starting their careers then. I come back to these artists and to figurative sculpture in Chapter Five. Before closing this subsection, I must point to the establishment of the Gomboc Gallery and Sculpture Park by designer and sculptor Ron Gomboc in 1982, and still operating today, as further evidence of the interest in sculpture in the 1980s.\(^{637}\)

### 4. The Artists and the Exhibitions

In this section, I consider four of the most significant exhibitions seen in Perth in 1987. I focus, first, on two exhibitions that were fundamental for the definition of a local art-historical narrative. The art writing and research that had started to appear from the 1960s (Chapter Two) were gathered and systematized by the curators who organised *Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950 (WA Art and Artists)* and *Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties (Among the Souvenirs)*. These exhibitions outlined the history of settler art in Western Australia during the past century up until the 1980s, while at the same time reflected views common among some of the most influential agents of the artistic field namely curators, academics and critics. Both were staged at AGWA that by

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\(^{637}\) Taylor, *One Hundred Years*, 23. The continued presence of this commercial gallery shows that there has been a market for locally-made sculpture for thirty-five years.
then had assumed a leading role in the research and dissemination of information about the visual arts. The other two exhibitions studied in this section showcased the work of Brian McKay and Carol Rudyard respectively. The former was shown at AGWA and the latter at Praxis. In 1987, after the appointment of Betty Churcher, AGWA initiated an unprecedented series of survey exhibitions that brought to the attention of the public the achievements of mid-career local artists. The Work of Brian McKay was the first event in the series. If AGWA sketched the history of local art through its exhibitions, Praxis showed the most adventurous and critical art made in Perth in a series of ten installations (Appendix 6) staged during 1987. I examine Carol Rudyard’s Traces as a notable example of these installations.

WA Art and Artists and Among the Souvenirs shared a central, common theme, locality. Curator Gary Dufour, who wrote the foreword to both catalogues, explained that WA Art and Artists came at an appropriate moment “the time when the Gallery is again re-evaluating its relation to locality and our role is again the focal point of vocal discussion amongst a wide community interested in the visual arts in Western Australia (my emphasis).”638 Similarly concerning Among the Souvenirs, he stated:

Contemporary arts practice in Western Australia has, of late, become a subject of considerable discussion. The experience of new art, as imported art within the conditions of absolute ‘placelessness,’ has been exchanged for an attitude which embraces the cultivation of locality (my emphasis).639

Locality was certainly the topic of the moment. The visual arts conference organised by David Bromfield to coincide with Among the Souvenirs had for title “Locality and Modernism in the Visual Arts” while the subject of the 1987 Salek Minc Invitation Art Lecture Series at UWA was “A Sense of Place: Artists and Location.”640 The exhibitions at AGWA make clear that this preoccupation with locality was part of a larger endeavour, namely the construction of a regional art-historical narrative not dictated by the global narratives originating in the art centres of North America and Europe.

The rejection of global narratives as the foundation of reliable knowledge, or as the basis for the definition of identity, can be understood as part of what Jean-François Lyotard labelled the postmodern condition. For the French philosopher, once knowledge is analysed as a discursive or

639 Gary Dufour, foreword to Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties by David Bromfield, (Nedlands, W.A.: Centre for Fine Arts, University of Western Australia, 1987), 6.
narrative formation the bases of its validity are called into question. Indeed, he defined the postmodern as incredulity towards the metanarratives that legitimate knowledge. It is worth noting that Lyotard diagnosed a condition that had become increasingly apparent from the 1950s onwards, but he traced its root causes to the internal inconsistencies present at the origins, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of the discourses legitimating knowledge. Building on the work of Austrian-born British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who studied the meaning of verbal behaviour as language games, Lyotard suggested that the diverse forms of discursive knowledge - science, literature or the arts - can be characterised as specific language games whose ultimate validity depends on the rules accepted by the experts, that is, by the participants in the game. In the realm of the visual arts this can lead to the corollary that if there is no universally valid art narrative, then the participants in the artistic field should be able to define the rules of their game according to the circumstances of their specific locality. Hence the postmodern plurality of views that arises if there is no need to follow the criteria dictated by master narratives of uncertain legitimacy.

Terry Smith and Ian Burn were among the first Australian writers who questioned the authority of the global art narrative produced in New York. Couched in language-game terminology, Smith formulated a critique of the discourse that assumed New York was the global metropolitan centre of contemporary art. Since artmaking is a rule-governed activity, Smith argued, the New York art world had located itself as the metropolitan centre by writing the rules of the game in avant-gardist terms in such a way that it remained the sole judge deciding who could play, how to play and who could win. In Smith’s view, the problem was that for as long as strong metropolitan centres, like New York, continued to define the state of play, and other centres continued to accept the rules of the game, all the other centres would be provincial. A way out of provincialism’s bind, under this formulation, could be for every art scene to determine its own rules of the game in accordance with local values. This might have been one of the objectives of the 1987 AGWA exhibitions as can be inferred from the purpose of the visual arts conference that accompanied the opening of Among the Souvenirs. The conference organisers intended to discuss “broader issues of regionalism and

642 Ibid., xxiv
643 Ibid., 29-30.
644 Ibid., 10, 40-41.
646 Burn and Smith were members of the Art & Language group, the publishers of the first journal dedicated to conceptual art. Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language informed the theoretical basis of conceptual art. Foster et al., *Art since 1900*, 442, 540 and 719.
648 Ibid., 57.
modernism in the visual arts, decentralisation, access, strategies of resistance to the centre, fake and authentic regional stances in art, and the regional implications for the post-modern debate.649

Keynote speakers Terry Smith and Belgian theorist Thierry de Duve addressed the conference participants on these topics.650

WA Art and Artists, the first of the 1987 exhibitions that constructed a local art-historical narrative, was a meticulously-documented history of painting during the first half of the twentieth century. It succeeded in demonstrating that art had its own history here thus meeting the most basic criterion to claim a regional tradition. However, based on the overwhelming predominance of naturalistic landscapes during the period surveyed, the curator of WA Art and Artists, Janda Gooding, came to define the local variety of regional art as a sign of the conservative nature of Western Australian society.651 This interpretation followed the best-known account of the history of Australian art in which the painters of the naturalistic landscapes popular in the inter-war years were labelled as conservatives and their paintings came to stand for unimaginative, repetitive art produced at the end of an exhausted tradition soon to be superseded by Australia’s own version of modernism.652 WA Art and Artists placed the art made in Perth up to the 1950s within this narrative. In a brief discussion of the “Perth moderns” - Elise Blumann, Guy Grey-Smith and Howard Taylor - Gooding hinted that modernism also made its way to Western Australia in later years.653

The reception of WA Art and Artists shows how widely accepted the modernist narrative of Australian art was in the 1980s. For instance, influential critics David Bromfield and Ted Snell wrote approvingly about this exhibition fully endorsing Gooding’s interpretation. Bromfield described the art included in WA Art and Artists as conservative and speculated that it was due to the lack of conflicting ideas in a place where conflict had never been an acceptable feature of social life.654 Snell offered a similar summary:

The conservative nature of Western Australian art in this period (a concentration on landscape and the avoidance of conflict) is well illustrated and though there were superficial changes in style, the artists made virtually no attempts to come to grips with society.655

650 Mike van Niekerk, “Is Perth the Best Place to Create Art?”
651 Gooding, Western Australian Art, 80.
652 The main books that disseminated this version of the history of Australian art are Bernard Smith’s Australian Painting 1788-1960 (1962) and Robert Hughes’s The Art of Australia (1970). The first signs of a sustained critique of this narrative only began to appear in 1988 with the publication of The Necessity of Australian Art, edited by Ian Burn.
653 Gooding, Western Australian Art, 74, 78-79.
Thus the then recently-identified regional tradition, dominant during the first half of the twentieth century, was branded as conservative, seemingly by consensus.

Against this background, the exhibition curated by David Bromfield, *Among the Souvenirs*, offered the promise of a new, “vital and original art” that was transforming the allegedly conservative outlook of the local tradition. After recapitulating what, in his opinion, had gone wrong with the art from this region, Bromfield outlined the elements required for the making of good local art. First, the immediate response to life as experienced here and second, the selective memories, the souvenirs - hence the title of the exhibition - of art produced somewhere else. According to the curator, the work of the twelve artists represented in *Among the Souvenirs* successfully integrated these two elements. In any case, the exhibition presented to the public a reasonable sample of most of the types of art coexisting in the postmodern Perth scene of the 1980s. It included the residual modernism of Howard Taylor and Brian Blanchflower whose work, in a sense, served as bridge between the art seen in *WA Art and Artists* and the art of the 1980s. The other ten participants in the exhibition engaged with postmodernist practices that can be roughly divided into two camps, critical art and figurative representation.

The undisputed stars of the exhibition Taylor (Fig 4.20) and Blanchflower were at the top of Bromfield’s hierarchy of the local art scene. Bromfield specifically referred to Taylor as “[t]he most distinguished of Western Australian artists.” Having completed several major public commissions, Taylor was recognised mostly as sculptor in the 1970s but not so much as a painter for he had

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657 Ibid.
658 Ibid. The artists represented in *Among the Souvenirs* were Howard Taylor, Brian Blanchflower, Su Baker, Andrew Hayim, Thomas Hoareau, Judith van Heeren, David Watt, Theo Koning, Eugenia Doropoulos, Pamela Kleeman, Louise Paramor and Allan Vizents/Media Space.
659 Ibid., 17.
exhibited paintings on eight occasions only between 1949 and 1984, and not always in art
galleries. This changed dramatically in 1985 when the Art Gallery of Western Australia held the
The exhibition’s well-researched catalogue had only one precedent in Western Australia, the
catalogue produced by Lou Klepac for the Guy Grey-Smith retrospective of 1976, but while Klepac
wrote a brief introductory essay summarising Grey-Smith’s biographical information, Dufour traced
the development of Taylor’s work, identifying his sources, describing his working methods and
contextualising his achievements. The detailed descriptions of Taylor’s observations of nature and
their subsequent translation into paintings and sculptures recalled the empirical method of the
scientist but applied to the field of art. In this context, Taylor was characterised as an innovator
always experimenting to perfect his representations of the local landscape in a contemporary
manner. This distinguished his work from an older, modernist era type of landscape painting.

Taylor arrived to his refined, minimalist aesthetic through ceaseless experimentation and innovation
thus fulfilling the role expected of progressive or avant-garde art. The timing of the rediscovery of
his *oeuvre* made it possible to locate it favourably in a global context given that by 1985 abstraction
and minimalism were consecrated styles. *Among the Souvenirs* confirmed Taylor’s position at the
summit of Western Australian painting with Bromfield praising his work as an example of the
masterful use of the European-American tradition of abstraction to render local motifs.

Brian Blanchflower, the other modernist painter included in *Among the Souvenirs*, was represented
in a rather peculiar manner in an exhibition dedicated to the art of the 1980s. Whereas in Taylor’s
case only recent works, all produced in 1986, were shown in *Among the Souvenirs*, Blanchflower was
represented by nine paintings and an assemblage made between 1972, the year he arrived in
Western Australia, and 1986. The selection resembled a mini retrospective showing the changes in
the artist’s approach to his new natural environment, that is, to his new locality. As seen in Chapter
Three, in the 1970s Blanchflower was an experimental artist, who combined painting with
installations and outdoor performances (Fig 4.21). In the early 1980s, his experimental activities
became less frequent and by 1987 he was mostly a painter exploring, again, the cosmic/sublime
themes that had attracted his attention earlier in his career (Fig 3.13).

662 The assemblage *Honey Event* (cat. 5), included in *Among the Souvenirs*, documented the outdoor
664 Bromfield traces Blanchflower’s renewed interest in large-scale natural events to a Krakatoa exhibition seen
Writing on Australian art of the 1980s, Terry Smith placed Blanchflower in the group of modernist painters that after practising abstraction responded to the challenges of postmodernism by exploring deeply humanist themes through a “cautious return to figurative imagery.”\textsuperscript{665} In this regard, Smith interpreted \textit{Canopy IV Transfigured Night} (Fig 4.22) as the markings on canvas of “awesome natural phenomena.”\textsuperscript{666} Certainly, the Canopy series and many other of Blanchflower’s paintings in the 1980s were inspired by natural phenomena as Bromfield has documented.\textsuperscript{667} Compared to his work of the 1970s, the “cautious figurative imagery” marked a change in Blanchflower’s style towards a conventional approach to painting that accompanied his new status in the art scene. By this stage, he was no longer an experimental artist exhibiting in alternative spaces; instead his one-person exhibitions took place at the prestigious Galerie Dusseldorf. He was

\textsuperscript{665} Terry Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 523
\textsuperscript{666} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{667} Bromfield, \textit{Brian Blanchflower}, 61.
also starting to build a national reputation by exhibiting in commercial galleries in Brisbane and Sydney.  

Besides the two established figures, Bromfield selected work by five emerging artists - Sue Baker, Andrew Hayim (Fig 4.23), Thomas Hoareau (Figs 4.13 and 4.17), Judith van Heeren and Theo Koning - who were exploring the revival of figurative painting discussed in subsection 2.2. The survey of local contemporary art was completed with examples of the experimental and critical side of postmodernism: photographs by Eugenia Doropoulos, collages by Louise Paramor, drawings of domestic appliances by sculptor and performance artist David Watt, an installation by Pamela Kleeman (Fig 4.24) and photographs and documents by Allan Vizents and Media Space (fig 4.25).  

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Fig 4.23 Andrew Hayim, from The History Book Series, 1986-1987, oil and acrylic on canvas, 175 cm x 175 cm, Janet Holmes à Court Collection, exhibited: Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties, AGWA, 1987, cat. 14.


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668 Ibid., 108.
669 Bromfield discussed the work of both Vizents and Media Space as a single entity in the catalogue of Among the Souvenirs. Besides Vizents, the principal members of Media Space were Jeff Jones, Judy Chambers, Paul Thomas, Neil Hollis, Bryan McKay, Anne Graham and Peter Clemesha. Bromfield, Among the Souvenirs, 25. Currently a photographer and video artist, Eugenia Doropoulos' name has changed to Roskopulos.
The works by Watt, Kleeman and Media Space were the most critically oriented, but while Watt and Kleeman were represented by single, visual art pieces addressing specific issues - consumerism in Watt’s case and male voyeurism in Kleeman’s case - Media Space/ Allan Vizents were represented by a series of photographs and texts documenting various aspects of the group’s critical stance. Media Space had disbanded by the time Among the Souvenirs opened, leaving behind very few examples of their creative output. Since the group had been committed to experimental art that resisted the intervention of the market in cultural production, many of their creations had been of an ephemeral nature such as performances, installations and contributions to the Artists’ Electronic Exchange System. A small sample of critical texts and the list of events in which the group participated appear in the catalogue of this exhibition, making it one of the few instances when documentation on Media Space was published.

Among the Souvenirs and its accompanying conference attempted to define a new path for the development of art in Perth. As Bromfield explained to the press, changing the character of local art was the main intention of the debate he hoped to promote through the visual arts conference he organised to coincide with Among the Souvenirs. In a similar way, the writings by UWA academics in the 1960s (Chapter Two) had encouraged change by championing the Perth version of modernism, while designating the previously popular paintings of the members of the Perth Society of Arts as outmoded. In a clear parallel, Bromfield commended emerging postmodernist practices

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671 Mike van Niekerk, “Is Perth the Best Place to Create Art?."
and the residual modernism of Taylor and Blanchflower while labelling the local landscape tradition, exemplified in the 1980s by the paintings of artists like Robert Juniper (Fig 4.4) and George Haynes, as conservative and uncritical.\textsuperscript{672} Significantly, this type of painting was not represented in \textit{Among the Souvenirs} even though it was popular at the time, particularly among corporate collectors as seen in subsection 2.1.

\textit{WA Art and Artist} and \textit{Among the Souvenirs} signalled an increasing commitment to local art on the part of AGWA. Before 1987, it had organised only two in-depth solo exhibitions dedicated to the work of local artists, Guy Grey-Smith and Howard Taylor, four surveys of local photography and one of audio-visual installations.\textsuperscript{673} \textit{WA Art and Artists} and \textit{Among the Souvenirs} had been closed by the time Betty Churcher was appointed as AGWA’s new director, but the broad community interest for these two exhibitions laid the ground for Churcher to start a series of regular exhibitions showcasing the achievements of well-known Perth artists. The series opened in November 1987 with \textit{The Work of Brian McKay} (Figs 4.8, 4.26 and 4.27), followed by \textit{George Haynes: A Survey, 3 Decades of Painting} (1988), \textit{Miriam Stannage: Perception 1969-1989} (1989), \textit{Brian Blanchflower Works 1961-1989} (1990) and \textit{Douglas Chambers: A Survey} (1991).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig4.26.png}
\caption{Fig 4.26 Brian McKay, \textit{Madreporaria}, 1957, oil on wall board, 92.5 x 56.5 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, exhibited: 1959 \textit{Perth Group Exhibition}, Skinner Galleries; \textit{The Work of Brian McKay}, AGWA, 1987, cat. 3}
\end{figure}

McKay was one of the central figures of the local art scene in the 1980s whose career spanned the years between \textit{WA Art and Artists} and \textit{Among the Souvenirs}. He began exhibiting in 1956 but came to prominence in the late 1950s and early 1960s as one of the founding members of the Perth Group, the first local collective dedicated to experimenting with abstraction (Chapter Two). Thus the

\textsuperscript{672} Bromfield, “Artist Who Could not Live on Air;” Bromfield, \textit{Among the Souvenirs}, 13.
1987 exhibition put McKay’s early career in the context of the high point of late modernism in Perth (Fig 4.26). He moved to Greece in 1964 and later on to Great Britain. He stayed in Europe for a decade not only witnessing the social upheavals of the time but participating in them as an artist. This activism alerted McKay to the possibilities of art as a catalyst for change. As seen in Chapter Three, he came back to Australia attracted by the reformist agenda of the Whitlam government. On his return to Perth, he pursued his ideals through artist collectives, joining Praxis in 1976 and Media Space in 1982. In both groups, he was a leading voice advocating for the establishment of a space dedicated to fostering experimentation with all forms of contemporary art. By the time The Work of Brian McKay opened in 1987, McKay’s project, the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, was well on its way to become a reality. For David Bromfield, the exhibition successfully illustrated both sides of McKay’s career, his painting practice and the importance of his convictions about the social value of art.

McKay’s painting can be seen as one of the forms of residual modernism that persisted in Perth well into the twenty-first century. He started by exploring abstract expressionism (Fig 4.26) but after returning from Europe his painting suggested symbolic meanings, communicated through texture, colour and nearly illegible inscriptions (Fig 4.27). In The Death of Avizo, an example of his symbolic paintings, the saturated-blue paint evokes the rough surface of an ancient stone. The composition can be read as a grave stone, a monument marking the death of McKay’s colleague and friend Allan Vizents who signed some of his writings with the pseudonym Avizo.

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Fig 4.27 Brian McKay, The Death of Avizo, 1987, oil on canvas, 133 x 137.5 cm, City of Bunbury Art Gallery Collection, exhibited: The Work of Brian McKay, AGWA, 1987, cat. 68

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674 Topliss, The Work of Brian McKay, 4 and 8.
675 Ibid., 4-5.
676 Ibid., 8.
After the events staged at AGWA, the most significant exhibitions took place at Praxis, the only Perth venue where exhibitions of painting were an exception rather than the norm. The programme of this alternative space concentrated mostly on experimental and critical art, particularly in the form of installations. In 1987, director John Barrett-Lennard curated a series of ten installations with the intention of providing “a forum for the examination and presentation of both installation as a form of current art practice and of the work of ten significant Western Australian artists.”

One of the most memorable events in the series was Carol Rudyard’s Traces. It consisted of the audio-visual montage Still Life with Telephone (1980); the first video made by Rudyard, Body Language (1983) and the video installation she prepared during her 1987 residency at Praxis, Still Life with Wine Goblet (1987).

Rudyard, a WAIT graduate, had her first solo exhibition at the Old Fire Station Gallery in 1973. Although she was producing some of the most compelling installations in Perth in 1987, she was certainly not the only local artist making innovative use of audio-visual technology. Nola Farman, for instance, had created a significant precedent with the Lift Project (Fig 4.28), a remarkable installation included in the exhibition Audio Visual Installations in Western Australia seen at AGWA in 1983. Using complex technology, the Lift Project explored in an interactive way the subconscious reactions of the viewers/ participants in an enclosed space.

Fig 4.28 Nola Farman, Lift Project, 1983, State Art Collection, AGWA

680 Rudyard and Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Point of View, 50.
682 Ibid., 2-3.
In *Body Language* (1983), her first video-based work, Rudyard scrutinised primarily sexual motifs in a style and scale of imagery derived from the conventions of television but at a deliberately slow pace. Similarly in the video installation *Still Life with Wine Goblet* (Figs 4.29 and 4.30), the camera moved slowly over seemingly banal objects, cutlery, a wine bottle, a wine glass, paper serviettes and a plastic flower. Using subtle juxtapositions, the video guided the viewer through multilayered references to the history of modernism, from the primary colours of Piet Mondrian’s restricted palette to Roy Lichtenstein’s still-lifes depicting similar objects to the ones featured in this installation. The ambition of Rudyard’s work is most evident in her allusions to the writings of French poet Stéphane Mallarmé who deployed a literary analogy to the phenomenon of synaesthesia to find correspondences between colours, ideas and tastes. Finding correspondences seems to have been at the core of Rudyard’s juxtapositions, but she did not follow the avant-garde practice of seeking to shock the viewer by presenting baffling juxtapositions. Her carefully organised films develop at a pace that encourages reflection rather than astonishment, thereby inviting the viewer to join the artist in her thoughtful scrutiny of the world around her.

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Fig 4.30 Carol Rudyard, *Still Life with Wine Goblet* (detail), 1987, video installation

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5. Aboriginal Art and Artists

A marked increase of interest in Aboriginal art was a notable feature of the Australian and Perth art scenes of the 1980s. The strategies the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB) had started to put in place in the 1970s finally bore fruit a decade later and by 1987, according to Ian McLean, “a virtual chorus was being heard, reiterating not just the quality of Aboriginal art but also its national and artworld significance.”\(^685\) I must note, however, that the choir was singing the praises mainly of one type of Aboriginal art, Western Desert painting. In Perth, the upsurge of interest was most visible at AGWA where the new leadership team, in particular the Chairman of the Board Robert Holmes à Court, made contemporary Aboriginal art a priority area.\(^686\) In February 1987, AGWA confirmed its new policy by dedicating, for the first time, a gallery to the permanent display of Aboriginal art but with a Western Australian turn for it included contemporary work from remote centres in the Kimberley region.\(^687\) For Ted Snell, the creation of this exhibition space demonstrated the growing awareness of Aboriginal culture as well as interest in the diversity and vitality of its art.\(^688\) Another sign of the re-evaluation of Aboriginal art, both critical and commercial, was the increase in the number of private galleries selling it, which went from one in 1975 to five in 1987.\(^689\) The commercial success had an added dimension in Perth, home to the Robert Holmes à Court Collection with its large holdings of Aboriginal paintings from remote communities, as it highlights connections between aesthetics, politics and economics that were instrumental in the valorisation of Aboriginal art.\(^690\)

Regrettably, local artists did not derive much benefit from the increasing appreciation of Aboriginal art, given that much of the attention concentrated on paintings from the remote areas of Central Australia and the Kimberley region.\(^691\) Their situation, though, was not unique. Urban-based Aboriginal artists faced similar conditions in the rest of Australia. McLean has remarked that Aboriginal artists living in remote regions dominated the art world story of Aboriginal art until the


\(^686\) Art Gallery of Western Australia, *Annual Report 1986/1987*, 4. Aboriginal art was also a key area for the new director of AGWA, Betty Churcher.


\(^689\) Mike van Niekerk, “Fashion Catches up with the Aboriginal Heritage,” *West Australian*, 28 February 1987.


\(^691\) Mitchell, “New Life for Aboriginal Art Master Stroke for WA Gallery.”
late 1980s, when an emerging generation of “highly radicalised” urban-based artists started to gain a presence in the art world.\textsuperscript{692}

The appearance of politically-charged Aboriginal art in the late 1980s must be seen in the context of the controversies surrounding the 1988 Australian Bicentennial celebrations. The activism of the 1960s and 1970s, discussed in Chapter Three, gained new momentum in the mid-1980s when the planning for the events commemorating the Australian Bicentennial provided the resources and the occasion for a debate on Australian identity.\textsuperscript{693} Unavoidably in a settler society, examining the issue of national identity brought the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples to the forefront of the debates.\textsuperscript{694} Many Aboriginal activists and organisations, not surprisingly, contested the celebrations of the Bicentennial.\textsuperscript{695} Yet, the controversies surrounding the 1988 celebrations, by focusing attention on national identity, also contributed to the new appreciation, to the new attachment to Aboriginal art and culture observed since the 1980s. Damian Skinner has noted that in order to assert indigeneity the nationalist narratives constructed by settler societies frequently incorporate references to Indigenous peoples and cultures.\textsuperscript{696} In the 1980s, in the midst of the arguments fuelled by the Bicentennial, embracing Aboriginal art might have helped settler Australians to imagine a local identity tied to the land since time immemorial. In a way, their adopted national identity legitimised their presence on otherwise foreign land, while at the same time distanced them from their British colonial past.\textsuperscript{697} However, this nationalist formulation requires glossing over two hundred years of appalling conditions imposed on the Indigenous peoples now co-opted as acquiescent citizens of the new nation. Activist Aboriginal art worked against such erasure of collective memory.

Despite not being the centre of the market’s attention, local Aboriginal artists benefited from the more receptive attitudes towards Indigenous culture. By 1987, there were tentative signs of their acceptance as members of the art scene such as the possibility of selling their work at two

\textsuperscript{692} McLean, \textit{How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art}, 56-57; Terry Smith, \textit{Australian Painting}, 509-510. McLean’s assessment of the scarce attention paid to urban Aboriginal art by the art world establishment is confirmed by Terry Smith’s account of Aboriginal painting in the 1970s and 1980s.

\textsuperscript{693} Myers, \textit{Painting Culture}, 202.

\textsuperscript{694} Nicholas Thomas and Damian Skinner have remarked the profound identity ambivalence common to settler societies. By seeking to construct a “native or national” identity in the colonised land, the settlers bring attention to the dispossession of the original occupants, the real natives, thereby highlighting the uncertain legitimacy of the nation. Thomas, \textit{Possessions}, 11-12; Skinner, “Settler-colonial Art History,” 137.

\textsuperscript{695} Myers, \textit{Painting Culture}, 202.

\textsuperscript{696} Skinner, “Settler-colonial Art History,” 136-137.

\textsuperscript{697} Ibid., 140. In his summary of key insights from the field of settler-colonial studies, Skinner points to the dual identity of the settler as colonised and coloniser. Adopting the colonised position, with the natives, allows settler narratives to place the responsibility for the dispossession of the Indigenous inhabitants on the British imperial centre.
commercial galleries in Fremantle, the Birukmarri Gallery and the Gallery of Original Arts and Artifacts. This was a remarkable improvement with respect to 1975 when they did not have access to art galleries or to any of the institutions of the artistic field. The Birukmarri Gallery sold traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art from throughout Australia but with an emphasis on Western Australia. 698 It showed, for example, clothes with designs by Walmajarri artist Jimmy Pike, paintings from the Kimberley region, and crafts from the Marribank Family Centre. 699 The work of Perth-based, Palyuku artist and writer Sally Morgan was among the top sellers at this gallery. 700

Fig 4.31 Sally Morgan, Citizenship, 1987, screen print, 76.3 x 56.8 cm, 19/30, National Gallery of Australia

Morgan, who published her landmark autobiographical book My Place in 1987, was then an activist producing screen prints with overtly political content. For instance, her print Citizenship (Fig 4.31) comments on the then approaching Australian Bicentennial by comparing the granting of citizenship to Indigenous people with the process of issuing a (dog) tag. Against the background of the Bicentennial debates, Morgan’s print adopts the perspective of the colonised and questions the validity of the settlers’ authority to impose on the Indigenous population the alien concept of citizenship and its attendant regulations. Morgan is representative of the generation of urban Aboriginal artists, characterised by McLean as “highly radicalised,” who started their careers in the 1980s. 701 Although Morgan, with her literary background, was most probably the only local Aboriginal artist producing this kind of art in Perth in 1987, rapid changes were underway and, as will

698 “Birukmarri: The Art of the First Australians,” National Aboriginal Day Magazine, 1987, 12. Established with the assistance of the AAB and the Fremantle Arts Foundation as a joint Commonwealth-State Government project in 1986, the Birukmarri Gallery was, as far as I know, the first Perth gallery with a Noongar name.

699 The Marribank Family Centre was located on the site formerly known as Carrolup Native Settlement. The Department of Native Affairs closed Carrolup in 1951, establishing the Marribank Farm School. Later, it became the Marribank Aborigines Mission. In the 1970s the site was passed to the Southern Aboriginal Corporation who operated the Marribank Family Centre in the 1980s as a crafts centre. Pushman and Smith, Koorah Coolingah, 53-63.


701 McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 57.
be seen in Chapter Five, Aboriginal art with a political message was to become prominent in the 1990s.

More common than politically-oriented art, the landscapes painted by artists associated with the Carrolup tradition were sold at the Gallery of Original Arts and Artifacts. In 1987, Noongar artists Naomi Mills, Wendy Feifar-Nannup and Shane Pickett (Fig 4.32) exhibited at this venue. The latter was then an emerging artist who, to an extent, continued the trajectory of Revel Cooper. Pickett began exhibiting in Perth in 1976 (Fig 4.33) at the headquarters of the New Era Aboriginal Fellowship, the same venue where Cooper had exhibited the previous year. As discussed in Chapter Three, Cooper’s landscapes evolved throughout the years to become, in the 1970s, rather similar to the naturalistic landscapes favoured by a large part of the Western Australian public. The work Pickett exhibited in the 1980s shares a similar aesthetic outlook. His Central Australian Landscape (Fig 4.32) shows that by 1987 he had mastered the bright colouring typical of the Carrolup style, but the composition of the picture and its subtle atmospheric effects bring it closer to Cooper’s late work (Fig 3.25) than to the Carrolup landscapes of the 1950s (Fig 1.19). I would suggest that the way Cooper and Pickett adapted their art to the expectations of their market, mainly settler Western Australians, explains to a large extent why they are two of the best-known painters who have worked within the Carrolup tradition. Their landscapes are examples of complex cultural products shaped both by the artists’ attachment to their land and culture and by their response to the economic and social constraints they faced within the settler society in which they worked.

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705 From the 1950s, landscape painting was a source of income, if a precarious one, for a number of Noongar artists. Robert Eggington has documented the economic exchanges between settler Western Australians and Noongar artists. Robert Eggington, Hamburgers for Masterpieces (Perth, W.A.: Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation, 2009).
Fig 4.33 Shane Pickett, *Landscape with Rivers and Hills*, 1976, oil on board, 45 x 60 cm, Private Collection

Pickett’s career is perhaps the most evident sign of the gradual opening to locally-made Aboriginal art, for he can be considered as the first Noongar artist recognised as a member of the Perth art scene. Pickett completed a Diploma in Fine Arts at the Claremont School of Art in 1983, received the Museum and Art Galleries Award at the Third National Aboriginal Art Award in 1986 and a sample of his paintings accompanied a tour of the Middar Aboriginal Theatre Company to the United States in 1987. He went on to have the first solo exhibition by a Noongar artist in a Perth commercial gallery, the Goodridge Galleries in 1990. I come back to this exhibition in Chapter Five. Pickett also contributed to the formation of the next generation of Noongar artists through his teaching at Canningvale Prison and as TAFE lecturer in Midland and Bunbury. All these achievements and the range of Pickett’s activities, from exhibitions to teaching, suggests that he was accepted as a regular member of the art scene, which was not the case for other Noongar artists active in the 1980s. I would argue that what distinguished Pickett from other Noongar artists, with whom he shared a common cultural background, was his formal training.

In Chapter Three, I discussed Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, the cognitive construction of reality shared by the agents of a cultural field and manifested as a set of deeply internalised dispositions that generates practices and perceptions. Art education is an important mechanism that propagates the dispositions of a professional artistic habitus. By going through the formal education system and completing the training in fine arts, Pickett was exposed to the assumptions and expectations of the art world. Furthermore, he learned about the functioning of institutions such as art galleries and art schools. Hence, in a very real sense, he was no longer an outsider but a member

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709 Bella Kelly, Lance Chadd (Tjillyungoo) and Wendy Feifar-Nannup are examples of Noongar painters active in the 1980s who did not achieve the level of recognition enjoyed by Pickett in the Perth art scene at the time.
of the artistic field. There is no separate section on Aboriginal art in Chapter Five because in the 1990s many local Aboriginal artists followed a professional path similar to Pickett’s.

6. Conclusions

Art critic David Bromfield has described the mid-1980s as the most exciting period for the arts in Perth.\(^{711}\) The information in Appendix 6, regarding exhibitions at selected galleries in 1987, supports Bromfield’s opinion. Chapter Four surveyed the local art scene in 1987, when the possibilities glimpsed in 1975 became recognised postmodern practices in a thriving setting that embraced a wide range of artistic manifestations. While changes in the political sphere supported the development of art in the direction of innovation and experimentation in the 1970s, it was mainly the influence of the economic sphere, through the influx of financial resources into the art market, which created the conditions for the booming of the visual arts in the 1980s.

Perth was perhaps one of the places where the effects of late capitalism on the artistic field were most evident. Obvious signs of the abundance of capital and its influence were seen in the proliferation of apparently successful commercial galleries and in the formation of large and prestigious corporate collections. The patterns of art consumption observed in the commercial sector indicate that if modernism lost its position as the dominant form of cultural production, it remained as a persistent residual form with a large following, at least in Perth. Although by this stage, postmodern practices such as installations and performances were accepted as legitimate forms of progressive art, the thriving commercial galleries showed mostly modernist paintings for which they found receptive consumers. Similarly, corporate collectors, with few exceptions, also concentrated their acquisitions on modernist art. In this regard, the Robert Holmes à Court collection was the most notable exception among corporate collections, for the range of its acquisitions included contemporary paintings in the figurative, and to an extent, regressive style adopted by emerging artists. It is possible to consider such purchases as speculative investments illustrating, once more, the reach of the capitalist imperatives into the cultural sphere.\(^{712}\)

Financial resources, though, not only flowed from the business sector. The building of the new AGWA, a Government commitment undertaken in the 1970s, was the single most important investment that changed the character of the Perth art scene in the 1980s. Besides providing

\(^{711}\) David Bromfield, *Waves: The Edith Cowan University Art Collection* (Mt Lawley, W.A.: Edith Cowan University, 2009), 121.

\(^{712}\) As seen in subsection 1.1, Robert Holmes à Court evaluated his art acquisitions as investments, a practice common in financial centres around the globe.
improved facilities and access to a wide range of art, the new gallery was given the resources to hire the professional staff needed to fulfil its research and education functions. It was the research conducted, mainly, at AGWA that led to the construction of the regional art historical narrative presented to the public in the 1987 exhibitions *WA Art and Artists* and *Among the Souvenirs*. Responding to the postmodern questioning of global narratives, the local narrative was framed within the parameters of the centre-periphery debates.

With the establishment of the Centre for Fine Arts in 1983, UWA also started to dedicate resources to the visual arts. The first director of this Centre, David Bromfield, contributed part of the research informing the AGWA exhibitions mentioned above. He continued the precedent of the UWA academics who had written art criticism to champion new art in the 1960s. Bromfield, however, was not in the isolated position of his predecessors who had been virtually the only art critics in town in their era, for in the 1980s art criticism flourished in the thriving local scene. The outlets for art writing multiplied and criticism, on a par with the critical and self-reflective nature of many postmodern art practices, attained a degree of sophistication not seen in Perth before.

The appreciation of Aboriginal art as contemporary fine art, fostered by the strategies the AAB implemented with Commonwealth funds, was boosted in the 1980s by the publicity surrounding the purchases made by prominent collectors such as Robert Holmes à Court in Perth. However, it was mostly the art created in remote centres that achieved this recognition. It was a different story for urban-based artists. They only started to establish a presence in the art scene amidst the debates on national identity sparked by the preparations to celebrate the 1988 Australian Bicentennial. Contesting the legacy of colonialism, urban-based Aboriginal artists used art as a vehicle for their political claims. Although with the notable exception of Sally Morgan’s work, there was not much activist Aboriginal art made in Perth in the 1980s, the local art scene became more accessible to the Noongar painters working within the conventions of the Carrolup tradition. For the first time, they gained access to art galleries and more importantly to art schools. The example discussed in this chapter of well-known Noongar artist Shane Pickett completing formal art training became more common in the 1990s. As will be seen in Chapter Five, professional training together with a cultural atmosphere more tolerant of diversity finally led to the acceptance of local Aboriginal artists as members of the artistic field.

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713 UWA had an art collection since the 1920s, but it was funded mostly through donations.
CHAPTER FIVE: In a State of Diminished Excitement, 1997

Chapter Four explored the moment fuelled by abundant financial resources, when the local art scene reached a peak of activity and diversity of art production. Its expansion, though, came to an end in the wake of an economic recession triggered by the stock market crash of 1987. This chapter surveys a Perth scene recovering a decade later and focuses on a significant change that contributed to set the direction in which art in Perth would develop in the next century, namely a general and broad shift towards an international context for local art practices. While inclusive of local artists, this shift represented a move away from the pervasive preoccupation with locality so evident in the 1980s. The reorientation towards an international outlook did not happen spontaneously. To an extent, it responded to economic and cultural policies implemented by the Australian government aimed at supporting an expansion of international trade as part of its efforts to stimulate the economy. At the same time, it also had much to do with the forces of globalisation that had marked the 1980s and intensified during the 1990s facilitating economic, social and cultural exchanges.714

In the first section, I explore aspects of the international and Australian cultural climate that had a bearing on the events observed in the Perth art scene of 1997. I proceed then to examine changes in the elements of the artistic field, structuring my survey as I did in Chapter Four around the concept of postmodern culture as a force field with coexisting residual and emerging forms of artistic production. I consider the characteristics of locally-made Aboriginal art in this section given that by 1997, a handful of Aboriginal artists were recognised members of the Perth art scene.

The section on exhibitions focuses on the construction of a broad background, both national and international, for local art practices by examining exhibitions staged at the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (LWAG) and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA). Among the AGWA exhibitions discussed in this section, I focus particularly on Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong, an extraordinary event that highlights the magnitude of the changes evident in 1997. This was the first time an Indigenous person curated an exhibition at AGWA and also, but not by coincidence, the first time Aboriginal art made in Perth was at the centre of an exhibition in the 102-year history of this gallery.

1. Postmodern Culture: Identity Politics, Revivals and the Artistic Field

After artists rejected the constraints imposed by the modernist definition of the work of art as an autonomous and self-referential entity, the way was clear for art that explored and questioned the cultural conditions within which it was produced and located. In the 1990s, a number of visual artists engaged in the cultural debates surrounding the different politics of identity. This type of critique contests the validity of assumptions that assign a subordinate position to certain social groups, usually minority groups, on the basis of notions such as race, gender or sexual orientation. The tools most commonly deployed by postmodern artists in their questioning of cultural assumptions combine forms of poststructuralist and deconstructive analyses in order to highlight that far from being an essential nature, identity is a social construct underpinned by cultural notions that can be challenged. Postcolonial discourse, a form of deconstruction that informs critiques of identity in the political context of decolonisation, became an increasingly important reference for artists in settler societies such as Australia. For Australian art historian Anthony Gardner, the 1990s was an era when identity politics surged through the world’s centres and peripheries alike, driven by postcolonial revisions of the past and desires to fracture monolithic identity constructions.

In the Australian artistic field, Aboriginal rights and feminism were the causes inspiring most of the visual art related to politics of identity. Sparked by the 1988 Bicentenary celebrations, the debates on national identity and Aboriginality continued throughout the following decade. If anything, they were intensified by the acknowledgment of Aboriginal land rights in the 1992 High Court decision of Mabo. Polarised views on the subject of race relations were evident in the responses to the report on the Stolen Generations, Bringing them Home, which was released in 1997. The refusal of Prime Minister John Howard to apologise for the wrongs exposed in the report did not help to reduce the controversies surrounding Aboriginal rights. I come back to the importance of this report for Perth-based Aboriginal artists in the context of the exhibitions discussed in Section 4. With regard to

715 A helpful analysis of this transition can be found in Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” particularly 41-42.
716 Foster et al., Art since 1900, 649.
717 Ibid., 683
718 Ibid., 671, 683.
720 Ibid., 241.
feminism, even though there were committed Australian artists addressing feminist concerns in their work of the 1990s, not many were based in Perth. Nevertheless in Section 4, I discuss three exhibitions seen at AGWA in 1997 that presented a feminist point of view.

In the international art scene, the 1990s witnessed a number of revivals spreading around a world ever more interconnected. One of the characteristics of early postmodernism was its tendency to quote from historical styles.\(^{722}\) In the last decade of the twentieth century, many artists who continued this practice turned to the art of the recent past. Minimalist and conceptual art, for example, had become part of the historical archive by this stage and hence were equally available for quotation.\(^{723}\) Yet, some of the quotations by the postmodernists of the 1990s were tinged with irony and included in critical artworks in a way that was alien to the creators of the original movements.\(^{724}\)

In Australia one of the most energetic revivals was that of geometric abstraction and even though not widely appreciated, it was embraced by the younger generation who exhibited in alternative galleries or in university venues.\(^{725}\) In this milieu, abstraction was considered, once more, an avant-garde style.\(^{726}\) Geometric abstraction and neo-minimalism were the most visible forms of revival in Perth in the 1990s. However, if in the east of Australia geometric abstraction, or neo-geo, was seen in alternative venues as an avant-garde practice, in Perth the artists reviving geometric abstraction exhibited in mainstream commercial galleries. By contrast, the art artists who deployed neo-minimalist strategies showed chiefly in non-commercial galleries and shared the critical edge associated with the conceptual and minimalist revivals overseas.

### 1.1 The Australian Art Scene in the 1990s

After the stock market crash of 1987 put an end to the economic boom of the 1980s, the flow of resources to the art scene diminished considerably and the following decade ushered in a period of “economic rationalism.”\(^{727}\) In the public sector, according to critic Christopher Heathcote, art galleries were expected to justify themselves mainly in commercial terms such as attendance and revenue, while art education was the target of severe rationalisation which led to harsh cutbacks in

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722 Foster et al., *Art since 1900*, 641.
723 Ibid., 679.
724 Ibid.
726 Heathcote, *Australian Painting*, 571.
727 Ibid., 558.
staffing, facilities and courses at art schools and art history departments in universities.\textsuperscript{728} But the heaviest toll of the economic downturn was felt in the private sector. Heathcote estimated that nearly 40% of the nation’s leading commercial galleries closed their doors as a consequence of the recession.\textsuperscript{729} Art criticism was another important element of the art scene badly affected by the worsening economy, for it not only led to a reduction of the sales of specialised publications but also of their subsidies. A local example was the closure of the journal \textit{Praxis M} after the Australia Council terminated its grant in 1991.\textsuperscript{730} In this respect, Heathcote went as far as attributing a decline in the quality of criticism to the need for it to become more market friendly amid the strained economic conditions.\textsuperscript{731}

Although not as evident as in the 1970s, the interactions with the field of political power became once again significant for the agents of the artistic field when the cultural policies of the Labor Government, under Prime Minister Paul Keating, aligned with its economic agenda and encouraged an opening towards international exchanges, in particular exchanges with the Asian region.\textsuperscript{732} The new policies were part of the efforts to overcome the economic recession by expanding international trade. One of the most visible manifestations of the implementation of these policies in the cultural sphere was the inauguration of the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1993.\textsuperscript{733} I explore some of their effects in the Perth artistic field when discussing public galleries in subsection 2.2.

\section*{1.2 Perth in the late 1990s}

Given the importance of the financial transaction of the corporations based in Perth in the 1980s, the collapse of the stock market that sent the Australian economy into a recession affected the local economy disproportionately.\textsuperscript{734} It would take a decade to see the beginnings of a sustained recovery of the national economy and a little longer in Western Australia. However by 1997, there were enough signs of improvement to encourage another phase of redevelopment in Perth. While a large section of central Perth was demolished and redeveloped in the 1980s, this time the focus was on East Perth.\textsuperscript{735} Significant investments transformed a derelict ex-industrial site, once home to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{728} Ibid., 559.
\item \textsuperscript{729} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{730} Bromfield, \textit{Gone West}, 165.
\item \textsuperscript{731} Heathcote, \textit{Australian Painting}, 559.
\item \textsuperscript{732} Devery and Wallis, “Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s.”
\item \textsuperscript{733} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{734} Gregory, \textit{City of Life}, 260.
\item \textsuperscript{735} Ibid., 323-328.
\end{itemize}
migrants and displaced Noongar people, into a prestigious new waterfront neighbourhood by 2000. In contrast to the redevelopment of the city centre in the 1980s that incorporated very few examples of public art, the plans for East Perth's redevelopment included art commissions. This was due mostly to the Percent for Art Scheme, a State Government initiative introduced in 1995 that consisted of allocating a fixed percentage of the construction costs of Government capital projects - such as schools, hospitals and prisons - to public art commissions.

Despite the subdued economic activity, an unprecedented number of art spaces opened during the 1990s owing in large part to the long-term nature of these projects, at least in the public sector. The Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery and PICA are notable examples of projects that came to fruition in 1990 and 1991 respectively, but which had taken form in the prosperous 1980s. In the second half of the decade, three purpose-built galleries opened their doors: Galerie Dusseldorf in 1995, Gallery East and John Curtin Gallery in 1998. The most significant change, however, was not in the numbers but in the enhanced quality of the exhibition spaces. The state-of-the-art facilities of the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (Fig 5.1) are the most striking demonstration of the magnitude of the change in the quality of exhibition spaces in the 1990s. This new gallery replaced the venue known as the Undercroft Gallery (Fig 5.2), a large space under Winthrop Hall where UWA had presented exhibitions since 1973.

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Fig 5.1 Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, July 1990, photograph by John Austin, reproduced in Barrett-Lennard and Watson, A Partial View, 14

736 Ibid., 328.
737 Ibid., 326.
738 Taylor, One Hundred Years, 28.
740 Barrett-Lennard and Watson, A Partial View, 11.
2. The Receding Perth Art Scene

2.1 The High End of the Market

The negative effects of the recession on the local art scene had similarities to those Heathcote observed in the rest of Australia as attested by the views of art critic John McDonald who visited the galleries of Perth in 1997. McDonald described a vibrant art scene located in an affluent city but where many commercial galleries were struggling. In his opinion, only the leading commercial galleries - Galerie Dusseldorf, Delaney Gallery, and the “ultra-chic” Goddard de Fiddes - were thriving, while the rest had to multiply their efforts “to cater for a diverse and fickle market.”

Two of the galleries mentioned by McDonald, Galerie Dusseldorf and Goddard de Fiddes, operated at the upper end of the local art market, supplying their affluent clientele with primarily locally-produced art. Galerie Dusseldorf was still the most prestigious venue for contemporary art thanks to its winning formula of catering to a large section of the public and building appreciation for contemporary art although of a rather conservative nature. In the 1990s, it was showing a mixture of residual modernism, such as the ever-popular genre of paintings with a connection to the natural environment, and the figurative work of artists who having emerged in the 1980s were now well-established in the local scene. An example of the former is Galliano Fardin’s *Travelling Light* (Fig 5.3), while Kevin Robertson’s *Asleep and Awake* (Fig 5.4) illustrates the figurative style of the artists who remain active at Gotham studios.

742 Ibid.
Goddard de Fiddes Contemporary Art, home of the revival of geometric abstraction in Perth, was opened by Curtin University lecturer Julian Goddard and Glenda de Fiddes in 1992. Their gallery, described by John McDonald as “ultra-chic,” occupied a large area on the terrace level of Perth’s newest officer tower. It concentrated on showing what was dubbed by Goddard as ‘West Coast Geometric Abstraction.’ Advertised simply as a “group show of new West Coast abstraction,” the 1997 exhibition *A Further Possibility* makes clear the type of art Goddard de Fiddes was promoting. The advertisement did not mention the term ‘geometric,’ let alone ‘revival,’ but the artists represented in *A Further Possibility* were working in geometric styles with links to the past. For example, Cathy Blanchflower’s geometric grids created effects reminiscent of Op art (Fig 5.5), while

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743 Julian Goddard and Hubert Besacier, *One Place after Another/ AC4CA* (Northbridge, WA: PICA, 2014), 19.
745 *A Further Possibility* included work by Cathy Blanchflower, Michele Sharpe, Carey Merten, Trevor Richards, Andrew Leslie, Jurek Wybraniec, Walter Gomes, Daniel Argyle and Emma Langridge.
Jurek Wybraniec’s wall drawings were composed of elementary geometric shapes not dissimilar to the shapes of early Constructivism (Fig 5.6).

**Fig 5.5** Cathy Blanchflower, *Atlas I*, 1997, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm, UWA Art Collection

**Fig 5.6** Jurek Wybraniec, *Untitled (Target)*, 1996, wall drawing, acrylic and oil on pegboard, 270 x 400 cm, Private Collection, exhibited: *Geometric Abstraction*, Goddard de Fiddes, 1997

Apart from painting, the range of contemporary art seen at Goddard de Fiddes included sculpture, installation work and photography. In some cases, installations and exhibitions of painting seemed almost indistinguishable as can be observed in a photograph of Daniel Argyle’s installation *Unit/System* (Fig 5.7) that highlights the extent of the overlap between these two art practices. This was not an isolated phenomenon happening at Goddard de Fiddes, the only commercial gallery that staged installations on a regular basis in Perth. The blurring of the boundaries between painting and installation was a characteristic that accompanied the revival of geometric abstraction in Australia in
Even though the geometric abstraction revival sought inspiration in the art of the past, in certain works the quotation was framed in a postmodernist manner. In the case at hand, the way Argyle’s painted panels were displayed in the space of the gallery negated the modernist autonomy of the work of art, affirming instead the phenomenological consequences of their location in the space of the viewer.

2.2 Public Art Galleries

If locality was the topic of the day in 1987, a decade later the Australian artistic field was turning its attention towards developments overseas and evaluating its position in the Asia-Pacific region. In Perth, a shift towards international art was most noticeable at AGWA under its new director Alan Dodge, but the change had already started by the time he assumed this position in January 1997. For example, the arrangements for the three main AGWA exhibitions of 1997 - *Modern Masters from the Museum of Modern Art, New York: The William S Paley Collection; Inside the Visible: Alternative Views of 20th Century Art through Women’s Eyes and The Golden Age of Dutch Art: Seventeenth Century Paintings from the Rijksmuseum and Australian Collections* - were in place before Dodge arrived in Perth. But he was instrumental in organising AGWA’s next international

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746 Heathcote, *Australian Painting*, 574
747 Devery and Wallis, “Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s.”
749 *Modern Masters from the Museum of Modern Art and Inside the Visible* came from the United States, opening at AGWA in December 1996 and February 1997, respectively. While Dodge did not participate in the decision to bring them to Perth, they mark the start of the international engagement introduced to AGWA
project, *Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions* presented as part of the 1998 Perth Festival. This exhibition, together with the plan to build a Living Centre for Australia and the Indian Ocean Rim, signalled the Gallery’s intention to focus more closely on the art of Asian and Indian Ocean Rim nations in an effort to find “a sense of cultural placement within the region.” Additionally, AGWA began to acquire important artworks from overseas as a way of providing “an international context to Western Australian art.” Presumably, the new policies intended to foster the appreciation of local art by contributing to the development of a better informed public, yet they met with a mixed reception. A number of local artists and their advocates saw the scarce presence of local artists in the gallery’s main exhibitions as an endorsement of the perception that they were not as important as artists from the east of Australia and overseas.

While the focus at AGWA shifted towards the international scene in the 1990s, the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery (LWAG) took on the task of showing Western Australian art against the backdrop of contemporaneous developments in Australian art. In 1997, it staged two of the most significant exhibitions for the history of local art, *The Way We Were: 1940s-1950s, from The University of Western Australia Art Collection* and *Swingtime: East Coast-West Coast: Works from the 1960s-70s in The University of Western Australia Art Collection*, which I examine in Section 4. These exhibitions marked an important shift at the LWAG which before the appointment in 1995 of its first director, Dr Anne Gray, had functioned mostly as a contemporary art gallery. Gray’s predecessors, Sandra Murray and Rie Heymans, concentrated on showing recent local art, particularly Heymans whose background as the manager of a commercial gallery helped her to put in place an outstanding program of exhibitions of contemporary art. However, before 1995, only a handful of the exhibitions staged at the Undercroft Gallery and the LWAG included art of the past. The new, more complete

throughout his tenure. According to then Director of Curatorial Programs, Gary Dufour, he selected *The Golden Age of Dutch Art* and proposed *Inside the Visible*. Gary Dufour, email to author, 5 January 2016.


753 Anne Gray, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, *The Way We Were: 1940s-1950s, from The University of Western Australia Art Collection* (Nedlands, W.A.: Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, The University of Western Australia, 1996); Anne Gray, Humphrey McQueen, University of Western Australia, *Swingtime: East Coast-West Coast: Works from the 1960s-70s in The University Of Western Australia Art Collection* (Nedlands, W.A.: Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, 1997).

754 UWA’s art collection was managed by a curator from 1965. The curator assumed responsibility for the management of the LWAG when it opened in 1990. The situation only changed in 1995 with the appointment of Anne Gray. She had been senior curator of the art collection at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and Education Officer at AGWA. Barrett-Lennard and Watson, *A Partial View*, 15.

755 The LWAG has records of its exhibition programs since its inception in 1990 and of the programs of its predecessor, the Undercroft Gallery, since January 1978. From these records, it appears that there were few exhibitions of historical works before 1996 at these galleries.
approach to the presentation of locally-made art at the LWAG was a timely change in light of the international reorientation of AGWA’s program and PICA’s exclusive commitment to contemporary art.

2.3 PICA and the Alternatives

While the programs of public and commercial galleries still concentrated on painting in 1997, the local public had access to more recent art forms at PICA and at artist-run spaces. By this time, PICA had become the centre envisioned in the 1980s by Brian McKay and Allan Vizents, where visual art was presented together with experimental theatre, music and dance. The diverse events staged at PICA were grouped in two separate programs, an exhibition program and a performing arts program. Only three of PICA’s 1997 exhibitions focused on what can be called traditional media, painting and sculpture. The rest of the program presented contemporary work in more innovative media including installations (Fig 5.8), photography, experimental film, electronic art, performance art and multimedia.\textsuperscript{756} Events in the last category juxtaposed paintings, sculptures, installations, electronic art, and so forth. The exhibition \textit{Penumbrae: Art in the Interstices of the Everyday}, discussed in Section 4, is an example of this kind of event.

\textbf{Fig 5.8} Cathy Blanchflower, \textit{Rainroom}, installation, 1000 Czech glass beads and thread, exhibited: PICA, 1997

In line with its mission, PICA not only offered a sympathetic environment to see contemporary art, it also actively encouraged new art practices through a research and development program. A crucial component of this program, funding, allowed artists to explore contemporary technologies that could lead to new forms of artmaking.\textsuperscript{757} The research funding awarded by PICA to Oron Catts, Ionat

\textsuperscript{757} Research and Development Funding was devolved to PICA by the Government of Western Australia through ArtsWA. Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts Limited, \textit{Annual Report 1997}, 14, 28.
Zurr and Paul Thomas, in 1997, did much to expand the horizons of the Perth art scene. It would lead years later to the establishment of SymbioticA at UWA and the Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth at the John Curtin Gallery.

By this stage PICA was not the only organisation promoting and showing experimental art. The 1990s saw a resurgence of alternative venues in Australia, driven in large part by the effects of the recession on the art scene which were particularly harsh on recently-graduated artists. Faced with the difficulties of finding suitable spaces for their first exhibitions, many young artists, who were not able or did not want to show in commercial galleries, banded together to launch their own venues. The new alternative galleries fostered a climate of innovation by showing the most adventurous art practices while at the same time providing space for political intervention by some of the youngest members of the artistic field. In Perth, there were nine exhibition spaces operated by artists in 1997. The most active and influential among them were the Verge Incorporated and the Jacksue Gallery/pad Studios. The latter had as mission “[to] exhibit art that critically engages with contemporary issues.” It was managed by curator, back then an emerging artist, Andrew Gaynor on behalf of a group of UWA graduates, who secured a degree of financial stability for their venture by renting as studio spaces most of the building where the gallery was located. With regard to the programming at the alternative venues, The Verge Incorporated was the place to see the most interesting non-commercial shows in Perth, at least in Gaynor’s opinion. Unfortunately, given the informal nature of the groups running these spaces, the records of the events they organised are scarce while the quality of the few photographs taken then is not the best. It might well be, though, that creating ephemeral art, as a way of avoiding commercialisation, was an intentional strategy of the artists who exhibited in alternative venues. An installation shot of Relaxed and Uncomfortable, created by Nick Horn and Chris Fitzallen, is an example of the type of events seen at The Verge Incorporated in 1997.

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758 Ibid., 28.
760 Heathcote, Australian Painting, 559.
761 D. J. Huppatz "Artist Run Spaces," 99; Heathcote, Australian Painting 559.
762 The artist-run spaces functioning in 1997 were Arthouse, Ellis House Gallery, Jacksue Gallery, Maltings Gallery, Moores Building, Spiral Studios, Photography Gallery of WA, Vast Gallery and the Verge Incorporated. The addresses of these venues appear in Appendix 7 that contains a list of galleries in Perth in 1997.
764 Ibid.
765 Ibid., 44.
766 Much of the information about installations in alternative galleries has been recorded by the participating artists in their Curricula Vitae, but this usually only identifies installation title, venue and date.
2.4 Aboriginal Artists in the Artistic Field

Three Perth galleries specialised in Aboriginal art in 1997, Indigenart - the Mossenson Galleries, Japingka Gallery and the Artist in Residence Gallery. The first two operated in a similar way to the galleries that had promoted this kind of art in the 1980s. They showed mostly work from remote centres located in the Kimberley region, Central Desert and Arnhem Land. Occasionally, they also sold locally-made Aboriginal art. The Artist in Residence Gallery, however, represented a departure from this practice. It sold exclusively art made in Western Australia but did not concentrate on the production from remote centres. A handful of Noongar artists exhibited at this venue in 1997, among them Shane Pickett, Sandra Hill and Athol Farmer.

Urban-based Aboriginal artists gaining access to the institutions of the artistic field was a phenomenon of the 1990s, when similar changes were taking place in the east coast of Australia. In relation to the Sydney art scene, for example, Ian McLean remarked that “[b]y the early 1990s, urban-based Aboriginal artists had a significant foothold in the artworld.” One of the events that most clearly demonstrated the acceptance of local Aboriginal artists as members of the Perth scene and the gradual breaking of the separation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous contemporary art happened in 1990 when Shane Pickett held a solo exhibition at the Goodridge Galleries. It was most likely the first solo exhibition by a Perth-based Aboriginal artist in a mainstream commercial

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767 “Artist in Residence,” Arts Unlimited: The Western-Australian Arts Magazine 1, November 1993, n.p. The Artist in Residence Gallery opened with funding from the Aboriginal Economic Development Office in 1993. Originally in Hay Street, it relocated to Kings Park in 1997, where it is still operating as the Aboriginal Art Gallery.


769 McLean, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, 57.
This event confirmed Pickett’s standing in the art scene for Goodridge showed the work of relatively well-known settler artists at the time like Cedric Baxter, Nigel Hewitt and Robert Birch.

By 1997, the display side by side of contemporary Aboriginal and settler art was a common sight at Artplace. Established by Brigitte Braun in 1992, Artplace promoted only Western Australian work and focused on emerging artists Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. For instance, Braun gave promising Yamatji painter Julie Dowling her first solo exhibition in a commercial gallery in 1996. Shane Pickett, Sandra Hill and Julie Dowling were some of the first local Aboriginal artists who exhibited in art galleries in Perth. Significantly, and unlike their predecessors, all three artists had formal training in art. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the art education system transmits the dispositions of a professional artistic habitus, which is the cognitive construction of reality shared by the members of the artistic field. Thus trained Aboriginal artists were able to participate in an art world whose assumptions and expectations they shared with their settler peers. Furthermore, the mastery of settler artistic conventions gave Aboriginal practitioners a form of agency, enabling them to use art as a vehicle to present political views.

The Aboriginal art made in Perth in the 1990s can be divided roughly into two types according to its political content. One type consisted of landscape paintings that extended the Carrolup tradition. Pickett was the best-known Noongar artist who continued to paint this sort of imagery well into the 1990s (Fig 5.10). As discussed in Chapter Three, the naturalistic landscapes of the Carrolup School (Figs 2.21 and 3.25) can be interpreted as affirmations of attachment to the land and Noongar

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772 David Bromfield, Waves: The Edith Cowan University Art Collection (Mt Lawley, W.A.: Edith Cowan University, 2009), 153; Dr Ian Bernadt, interview by author, Perth, 10 November 2014.
identity, but the visual clues that lead to this interpretation are subtle. By contrast, the politically-oriented art that started to appear in Perth in the 1980s and became more common in the 1990s treated rather explicitly the problematic subjects of Aboriginal identity and rights in a postcolonial setting. The art created by Dowling and Hill is clearly within this second category. In her painting _Carol and Julie_ (Fig 5.11), Dowling addressed the prejudice and racism that she and her twin sister experienced as children of a poor Aboriginal family living in Perth. For her part, Hill adopted a more conceptual approach to artmaking, which can be seen in the collage _Aborigines and Fisheries_ (Fig 5.12). In this case, she appropriated images from diverse sources to question, or perhaps to denounce, the ongoing effects of colonialism on her forcibly separated family.775 I come back to the work of these two artists when I consider the exhibition _Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong_ in Section 4.

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Fig 5.11 Julie Dowling, _Carol and Julie_, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 90 cm, Cruthers Collection of Women’s Art, exhibited: _Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong_, AGWA, 1997

Fig 5.12 Sandra Hill, _Aborigines and Fisheries_, 1996, solvent transfer print, watercolour and mixed media, 56.9 x 76.5 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA

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775 Croft and Gooding, _South West Central_, 32; Croft and AGWA, _Indigenous Art_, 88.
2.5 Collectors

In the wake of the economic downturn provoked by the stock market crash of 1987, two Perth-based corporate collections fared rather badly. The Alan Bond Collection vanished, together with Bond’s fortune, while the Robert Holmes à Court Collection was substantially downsized following the death of the businessman in 1990. Yet even in the slow economic conditions, another corporate collection, the Kerry Stokes Collection, became well-known in the 1990s. Kerry Stokes started to purchase art in the 1970s, but his collection only took a well-defined direction with the appointment of John Stringer to the position of curator in 1992. Stringer, who had extensive experience as curator of contemporary art in Australia and the United States, joined the Stokes Collection after four years as Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at AGWA. He informed a dialogue with Kerry Stokes that proved instrumental in developing a private collection which fulfilled the goal of focusing on Australian history and culture within a wider frame of reference. The intention, according to Stringer, was to set a global context that would bring fresh perspectives to local achievement.

In light of its goals, the Kerry Stokes Collection accumulated significant holdings of international art under Stringer’s stewardship. Since the 1990s, it has assisted the appreciation of local work mainly through exhibitions and loans to public art galleries. Indeed, supplementing the holdings of public galleries has been a key contribution of the main corporate collections located in Perth. The exhibition Material Perfection: Minimal Art and Its Aftermath: Selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection was an outstanding example of this kind of collaboration. It presented locally-made art next to the work of international figures such as Bridget Riley, Frank Stella and Sol LeWitt.

Perhaps to counteract the financial difficulties created by the strained economy, a couple of art patron groups were established in the 1990s. Led by John Stringer, the Collector’s Club was formed at the end of 1996 with the aim of promoting the local visual arts through the informed collection of contemporary work. The Collector’s Club continues to the present, now augmenting its activities with the presentation of the John Stringer Award to a local contemporary artist annually. In a similar vein, the Mark Howlett Foundation funded projects by mid-career artists for up to eighteen months.

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777 The status of the ownership of the Kerry Stokes Collection is unclear. It might be vested on Australian Capital Equity, Kerry Stokes’ holding company and copyright owner of the publications on this collection.


779 Stringer, Material Perfection, 9.

780 Ibid.

each and at the end of this period its members received a fixed number of artworks.\textsuperscript{782} Although the Foundation’s membership included business people and professionals, it was artists rather than patrons who organised this subscription group. The Mark Howlett Foundation operated between 1991 and 2011.

3. Sculpture and Public Art

There were few exhibitions of sculpture in 1987 when, as discussed in Chapter Four, it was more common to see sculptural works included as elements of installations. In the decade from 1987 to 1997, exhibitions of this art form became more frequent thanks in no small part to the series of annual sculpture surveys initiated by the Gomboc Gallery and Sculpture Park in 1984.\textsuperscript{782} Established and emerging sculptors have participated in these events now for more than thirty years, thus gradually developing a public for local sculpture.\textsuperscript{784} In addition to these regular exhibitions, two high-profile events brought local sculpture to the attention of a wider public. \textit{Backward Glance: A survey of Western Australian Sculpture from the mid-1960s to the 1990s}, the first major survey of Western Australian sculpture in a public gallery, was held at PICA in 1991, followed by \textit{One Hundred Years: Western Australian Sculpture 1895-1995} presented at AGWA in 1995, as part of the gallery’s centenary celebrations.\textsuperscript{785} Thus by the middle of the decade a context had been established for the appreciation of contemporary developments.

Broadly, two distinct styles of sculpture predominated among the sculptors working in Perth in 1997, a representational or figurative style and an abstract or neo-minimalist style. The former was practiced mainly by a group of graduates from the Claremont School of Art who came to be known as the East Bloc. According to one of the founders of the group, sculptor Stuart Elliott, their initial aim had been to organise shows free from the concerns of a commercial gallery.\textsuperscript{786} Later, they also


\textsuperscript{783} Nien Schwarz, foreword to \textit{32\textsuperscript{nd} Annual Exhibition Sculpture Survey 2015} (Perth, W.A.: Gomboc Gallery Sculpture Park, 2015), 2, exhibition catalogue.

\textsuperscript{784} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{785} Watt, \textit{Backward Glance: A survey of Western Australian Sculpture from the mid-1960s to the 1990s}; Taylor, \textit{One Hundred Years: Western Australian Sculpture 1895-1995}.

promoted their work in the Eastern States.\textsuperscript{787} Besides Elliott (Fig 5.13), other sculptors associated to this collective included Allan Clarke, Anne Clarke, Peter Dailey (Fig 5.14), Michelle Elliott, Ron Gomboc, Mary Knott, Tony Jones (Fig 5.15), Jon Tarry and Kath Wheatley.\textsuperscript{788}

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\textsuperscript{787} Since most artists associated with this group lived in the eastern suburbs of Perth, they adopted the ironic name East Bloc with its connotations of a dividing wall during the cold war. In this case, they were unable to tear down the wall and no exhibitions of the group eventuated in Sydney or Melbourne. Bromfield et al., \textit{Small is Beautiful}, 16.

\textsuperscript{788} Ibid.
The artists of the East Bloc were an eclectic group but most of their sculptures shared two distinctive traits; they were figurative and generally involved skilful crafting. Both traits might have been considered as somewhat anachronistic by the late 1990s. Except for the Gomboc Gallery, their work did not meet with much success in commercial galleries. However, by this stage sculptors could rely on a parallel system of patronage in the form of teaching positions in educational institutions and official commissions through the Percent for Art Scheme. An example of the commissions awarded through this scheme is Tony Jones’s *Ballajura Figure* (Fig 5.16).  

Tony Jones and Jon Tarry were the two most influential sculptors involved with the East Bloc. Jones has been an important figure in the Perth art scene as a teacher, as an advocate for the establishment of PICA and as a prolific sculptor who started to exhibit in 1968. His work has been fairly representative of the figurative trend in Perth sculpture. By contrast, Tarry’s sculptures (Fig 5.17) differed markedly from the pieces created by the rest of the group. Trained at the Claremont School of Art and at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT), he completed postgraduate studies in Munich under Eduardo Paolozzi in 1987. Even though he exhibited sporadically with some of the East Bloc artists, especially with Stuart Elliott, Tarry embraced a neominimalist aesthetic in the 1990s. A postmodern artist no longer constrained by the conditions of a particular medium, Tarry went on to diversify his practice into film, sound and architecture.

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790 Bromfield et al., *Tony Jones*, 51.
Tarry’s work together with that of younger artists, such as Rodney Glick (Fig 5.18) and James Angus, exemplify the neo-minimalist style of sculpture seen in Perth in the 1990s. Their sculptures, much more simplified than the figurative pieces of the East Bloc, emphasise formal elements such as colour and shape with the clarity in the ordering of these elements contributing to their visual appeal. Howard Taylor’s refined sculptures (Figs 5.19) can also be aligned with this restrained style. In contrast to the figurative trend, the minimalist aesthetic of Taylor and Tarry was well received by the local market and both exhibited with prestigious commercial galleries. From 1995, Tarry maintained a long-term association with Goddard de Fiddes, the champion of abstract art in Perth, while Taylor exhibited for the rest of his life almost exclusively at Galerie Dusseldorf. Taylor had been working with this kind of formal vocabulary since the 1970s (Figs 3.10 and 3.11), yet it would appear that the local market embraced his austere approach to sculpture only in the wake of the minimalist revival of the 1990s.
The revival of minimal and Conceptual art was a widespread phenomenon in the 1990s, but the younger generation that appropriated the formal devices of minimalism in the art centres of Europe and North America typically used it in a postmodern fashion to comment on the expanded cultural frame. Whereas the first version of minimalism broke one of the fundamental tenets of modernist art by entering the space of the viewer, its critique of modernism stayed within an aesthetic context and hardly touched on the cultural frame. In the revival of the 1990s, some artists used the simplified vocabulary of minimalism in order to focus on particular aspects of reality for critical purposes or to evoke psychological states. In Perth, James Angus and Rodney Glick (Fig 5.18) created sculptures/installations that can be located within this type of neo-minimalist approach to artmaking. Angus, a graduate from Curtin University of Technology, completed a Master of Fine Arts (Sculpture) at Yale University in 1998. Like Jon Tarry, Angus is another Perth sculptor that went on to have an international career, which was just starting in 1997 when his sculptures were shown in Wellington and New York. In Section 4, I discuss examples of his work included in the exhibitions Penumbrae: Art in the Interstices of the Everyday and Material Perfection: Minimal Art and Its Aftermath: Selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection.

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792 Foster et. al, Art Since 1900, 679.
4. The Artists and the Exhibitions

In this section, I consider five important exhibitions that exemplify how local art practice was presented in an increasingly broader context towards the end of the 1990s. In the first instance, I examine *Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong (Daughters of the Dreaming)*. A ground-breaking event, *Daughters of the Dreaming* featured urban Aboriginal art prominently and was the first AGWA exhibition curated by an Indigenous person. Then, I study two exhibitions organised by the LWAG that contributed substantially to document the history of local art between 1940 and 1980. The last two exhibitions discussed in this section, *Penumbrae: Art in the Interstices of the Everyday* and *Material Perfection: Minimal Art and Its Aftermath: Selected from the Kerry Stokes Collection* were shown at PICA and the LWAG respectively. They focused on some of the most innovative art practices seen in Perth in the late 1990s, in a way, pointing towards the art of this century.

Despite the mixed reception of its international reorientation, AGWA was, nonetheless, able to build an international context for local art. A case in point was the simultaneous presentation in 1997 of the exhibitions *Inside the Visible: Alternative Views of 20th Century Art through Women’s Eyes (Inside the Visible)*, *Contemporary Australian Women Artists and Daughters of the Dreaming. Inside the Visible*, an exhibition with an explicit feminist agenda, included work by thirty-two women artists from Europe, North and South America in a variety of media from watercolours to installations from the 1930s to the 1990s. Contemporary Australian Women Artists showcased recently acquired works by Susan Norrie, Penny Bovell, Miriam Stannage and Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Even though this display did not have a thematic focus, it nevertheless allowed for formal comparisons with the art on show in *Inside the Visible. Daughters of the Dreaming*, a trailblazing exhibition, epitomises the way politics of identity, central to the Australian cultural debates of the 1990s, were effectively taken up in art. It adopted a feminist stance in the sense that all the artists represented treated subjects from a personal perspective, which was not dissimilar to the perspective offered by the art of their counterparts in *Inside the Visible*. But it was for its singular engagement with the consequences of colonisation that *Daughters of the Dreaming* can be considered a ground-breaking event.

Curated by Noongar woman Tjalaminu Mia, *Daughters of the Dreaming* was the first exhibition of Aboriginal art organised at AGWA not dedicated to art from remote communities. Instead more than half of the artists included were based in Perth, among them Sandra Hill, Sally Morgan, Julie Dowling

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These were urban artists addressing the painful subject of the stolen generations, a subject that touched them personally. The topic received much public attention in 1997 when the report of the inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal children from their families was published. Rather than inviting detached contemplation, many of the images in *Daughters of the Dreaming* confronted the viewer with the catastrophic consequences of colonisation policies. Mia stated in her catalogue essay that political positions were at the core of the exhibition:

“contemporary Aboriginal artists - both women and men - are engaging in political debate, addressing in their work their perceptions of the colonisation experience and post-colonial engagement.”

The participation of a Noongar woman as curator was a first at AGWA. Her understanding of the views of Aboriginal peoples had much bearing on the political tone of *Daughters of the Dreaming*. She explained that the artists she had selected were “the new activists” contributing to attitudinal changes.

Indeed, there were works in the exhibition that made the case for Aboriginal rights in such a forceful manner that they can be characterised as a form of activism.

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Fig 5.20 Julie Dowling, *Hail Mary, Mother of God*, 1996, synthetic polymer, blood and red ochre on canvas, 108 x 112 cm, State Art Collection, AGWA, exhibited: *Daughters of the Dreaming*, AGWA, 1997

Julie Dowling painted some of the most confrontational images in *Daughters of the Dreaming*. In *Hail Mary, Mother of God* (Fig 5.20) she literally used blood, mixed with acrylic paint, to depict the suffering of several generations of Aboriginal women forcefully separated from their children. Raised

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797 Ibid., 6.
798 Ibid., 3.
in the Catholic faith, Dowling wrote on her painting the first lines of a prayer to the Virgin Mary proclaiming that motherhood is sacred. Similarly Sandra Hill placed Noongar claims at the centre of her work *Heartlands* (Fig 5.21). She superimposed photographs of Aboriginal people, small reproductions of colourful Carrolup landscapes and Aboriginal symbols on an apparently fading background made of historical images of Aboriginal ancestors gazing at the viewer. Her composition seems to defiantly reaffirm the enduring ties of her people to the Noongar country despite the State policies that attempted to break those ties. As indicated in subsection 2.3, both artists undertook formal training in art. These images are evidence of their effective use of postmodern devices such as expressionist figuration and text, in Dowling’s case, and appropriation of imagery from diverse sources in Hill’s case. I would argue that it was their deployment of such devices, their competent handling of art conventions that brought their work into the same space where the work of settler artists is appreciated, the space of the art gallery.

Fig 5.21 Sandra Hill, *Heartlands*, 1995, mixed media transfer with synthetic polymer on paper, 91 x 104 cm, Central TAFE Art Collection, exhibited: *Daughters of the Dreaming*, AGWA, 1997

The two most significant exhibitions for the history of local art *The Way We Were: 1940s-1950s*, *from The University of Western Australia Art Collection (The Way We Were)* and *Swingtime: East Coast-West Coast: Works from the 1960s-70s in The University of Western Australia Art Collection (Swingtime)* were shown at the LWAG. Curated by the first director of this gallery, Anne Gray, *The Way We Were* was shown from April 1996 to March 1997 and *Swingtime* from August 1997 to June 1998. These exhibitions could be seen as continuing the story told in *WA Art and Artists*, discussed in Chapter Four, in the sense that all of them followed the evolution of local painting, yet the differences in context and focus make it difficult to discern clear continuities. *WA Art and Artists* constructed a historical narrative by placing the evolution of painting in a broad socio-cultural context, whereas *The Way We Were* and *Swingtime* did not build a narrative and focused primarily
on formal comparisons with the art created in the east coast of Australia. There was hardly any reference to the socio-cultural conditions in which the paintings were produced, at least in the exhibition catalogues. Nevertheless, *The Way We Were* and *Swingtime* brought to the attention of the public a wide range of work by Perth artists, from the emerging figures of the 1950s, for example Guy Grey-Smith (Figs. 5.22) and Howard Taylor, to painters who started their careers in the 1970s like Jeremy Kirwan-Ward and Ken Wadrop (Fig 5.23). Displaying their paintings in close proximity to those by some of the best-known Australian artists - such as Sydney Nolan, Fred Williams and John Olsen - most likely benefited the reputation of the locals. Moreover, the scholarly catalogues that accompanied these collection exhibitions were significant contributions to the history of painting in Perth and remain as one of the few sources of information on settler artists active between 1940 and 1980.

Fig 5.22 Guy Grey-Smith, *Blackboy Grove*, 1950, oil on canvas, 56 x 77.5 cm, UWA Art Collection, gift of Dr and Mrs R K Constable, exhibited: *The Way We Were*, LWAG, 14 April 1996 to 30 March 1997, cat. 23A

According to Margaret Moore’s review of *Swingtime*, the panels accompanying the paintings on the walls of the LWAG did not provide a broader context. They carried anecdotes by the artists, locating the works within their *oeuvre*. Margaret Moore, “Swingtime, East Coast-West Coast Review,” *Artlink* 18, no.1 (1997): 75.
PICA’s commitment to showcasing the innovative work of Perth contemporary artists was evident in the exhibition *Penumbrae: Art in the Interstices of the Everyday (Penumbrae)*. It explored “the relationship between the modern/postmodern quotidian, the institutional status of art and the emergence of new models of subjectivity and representation.” Curator Marco Marcon, former editor of *Praxis M*, based the exhibition’s title and premise on the writings on art of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Marcon selected a cross-section of artists at different stages of their careers but sharing an experimental approach to artmaking, from the well-recognised Carol Rudyard and Nola Farman, who by this stage had been exhibiting for more than three decades, to the then promising, recent graduate James Angus. They were represented by works made in a variety of new media such as interactive computer art by Nola Farman, video installations by Carol Rudyard and sculptures/installations by Valerie Tring, Rodney Glick and James Angus.

Fig 5.24 Carol Rudyard, *This is …*, 1985 (left), video installation, VHS video, stool, 16 white boxes, coffee table, 12 floor tiles, electric toaster, coffee cup and saucer, pot plants, wooden platter, television set, VCR and video guide, installation dimensions variable, Art Gallery of New South Wales; *This is …*, 1985, detail (right)

The best documented artwork in *Penumbrae*, Rudyard’s video installation *This is…* (Fig 5.24), consists of the videorecording of simple, everyday objects in a domestic setting, yet it manages to be a sophisticatedly staged work of art at the same time. In this case, Rudyard’s admiration for the writings of Marcel Proust informs her contemplation of the way memories of daily life are created.

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801 Marco Marcon, email to author, 24 November 2015. Heidegger argued against an aesthetic approach to art, believing that art can help in the identification of the important things in life and further their understanding.
and subsequently evoked. In a remarkable visual analogy to the refined handling of the written word by Proust, Rudyard’s camera moves slowly, gliding from one kitchen object to the next to uncover surprising connections such as the detail of a painting by the master of optical illusions Johannes Vermeer (Fig 5.24). A second video installation by Rudyard included in Penumbrae, Body Language III, alternates between images of female bodies and a lush natural setting, presumably the subject of an implied male gaze. The completely different aesthetic approach of this video, with its ominous connotations of crude sexuality, illustrates how the exploration of a central idea guides the manipulation of the medium in the work of a conceptual artist such as Rudyard.

Fig 5.25 James Angus, Bored Again, 1995, cast polyester and epoxy resin, transfer labels and laminated Xerox, 188 x 288 cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, exhibited: Material Perfection, LWAG, 1998, cat. 26

Bored, an installation/sculpture by James Angus was described by David Bromfield as “a wall of multi-coloured plastic copies of can openers.” The word ‘copies’ suggests that the objects on display were not the utilitarian (or real) can openers available in stores, but multiple representations crafted by Angus. Ted Snell’s review of Penumbrae described the 120 can openers in Bored as “a visual feast of multi-coloured objects that read from a distance as a large, abstract, coloured grid.” Unfortunately there are no photographs of this installation but according to the descriptions of critics Bromfield and Snell, it is highly likely that it was similar to another sculpture/installation by Angus, Bored Again (Fig 5.25), had a similar appearance. This work consisted of 120 multi-coloured copies of a portable radio cast in plastic resin in five bright colours. John Stringer noted the “formal

804 Rudyard and Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Point of View, 10.
805 Ibid., 13.
806 Bromfield, “Reed Retrospective is a Fitting Farewell.”
807 Snell, “Visions from the Edge of Darkness.”
aesthetic legacy of minimal art” in *Bored Again*. This is most evident in the simplicity of the pattern formed by repeating just one element. Stringer also highlighted Angus’s choice to replicate the radio motif using conventional modelling and casting techniques and contrasted it to the rejection of handcrafting in favour of the appropriation of industrially produced goods by earlier minimalist artists, like Dan Flavin (Fig 5.26) for instance. Angus is part of the generation of postmodern artists who turned to minimal art for inspiration and quoted selectively some of its formal strategies for purposes that have little in common with those of the original movement. In this case, the hand-crafted reproduction of banal, mass-produced objects in *Bored and Bored Again* suggests a critical comment on the cultural practices of the society in which these installations were produced, specifically on consumerism. By comparison, the critical component of the earlier minimalist movement was more self-reflective since it targeted not the culture at large but modernist art, that is, another approach to artmaking.

Fig 5.26 Dan Flavin, *Untitled (For You Leo in Long Respect and Affection)* 2, 1977, pink, green, blue and yellow fluorescents in commercial fixtures, 266 x 266 cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, exhibited: *Material Perfection*, LWAG, 1998, cat. 14

Angus was by no means the only Perth artist working in a minimalist manner in the late 1990s. That much was demonstrated by the exhibition curated by John Stringer, *Material Perfection: Minimal Art & its Aftermath (Material Perfection)*, which illuminated some of the ways local artists availed themselves of minimalist strategies for their own critical and aesthetic purposes. Drawing on the rich holdings of the Kerry Stokes collection, Stringer presented works by some of the best-known

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809 Ibid.
exponents of the original movement, like Dan Flavin (Fig 5.26), Frank Stella and Sol Lewitt, alongside representative examples by Western Australian artists James Angus, Galliano Fardin, Miriam Stannage, Howard Taylor (Fig 5.27), Rover Thomas, Virginia Ward (Fig 5.28) and Jurek Wybraniec. Stringer remarked that despite formal affinities, there was in the local examples a creative departure from the purist configurations of Minimal art. 810 He noted, for example, the “deliberate current of irony” in the work of Angus; the embrace of chance, coincidence and chaos in Ward’s installations (Fig 5.28) and the use of rich decoration on the simple structures created by Wybraniec. 811

Fig 5.27 Howard Taylor, Log, 1976, oil on canvas on metal tube, 34 x 183.5 x 20 cm, Kerry Stokes Collection, exhibited: Material Perfection, LWAG, 1998, cat. 13

Fig 5.28 Virginia Ward, You Are My Sweet Plaything, 1995, polyvinyl piping and corners with fluorescent spray; 4 units, 182 cm high, other dimensions variable, Kerry Stokes Collection, exhibited: Material Perfection, LWAG, 1998, cat. 27

810 Ibid.
811 Ibid., 52, 62, 64.
It is worth noting the way Stringer interpreted and assessed the artworks shown in *Material Perfection*. He applied the same criteria whether they were made in New York or in Perth, effectively locating the latter in a global context. One of the most important aspects of Bourdieu’s concept of the artistic field is the recognition that artworks are symbolic goods whose value resides in the meanings they acquire through the specialised discourses circulating in the artistic field.\(^1\) In the case at hand, Stringer’s critical assessment was informed by the art discourses circulating in the international scene hence his interpretations ascribed cultural meanings to the local works in a fashion that is understandable and valid for a global public of art consumers, the sort of public a handful of Perth artists were reaching by the end of the century.

Despite geometric abstraction and minimalism not being popular with the local public, the best-known Perth artists of the time, Howard Taylor, Brian Blanchflower and Miriam Stannage were all working in this reductionist manner. Taylor, who by this stage had attained the highest degree of recognition nationally, continued his refined exploration of the natural world using a minimalist vocabulary (Fig 5.19). Blanchflower’s representations of the sublime aspects of nature of the 1980s (Fig 4.22), by the end of the century were giving way to more simplified, neo-minimalist artworks like *Canopy XLV (Array II)* (Fig 5.29), where all the attention concentrates on texture and colour. Stannage’s art practice was more diversified, more postmodernist that either Taylor’s or Blanchflower’s in the sense employed by Rosalind Krauss, for whom a postmodernist practice is not tied to a particular medium.\(^2\) By 1997, Stannage’s practice comprised painting, print-making, photography, video and assemblage. Yet her paintings of the time also conform to a minimalist aesthetic (Fig 5.30) and like Taylor and Blanchflower, she took as point of departure the contemplation of nature.

\(^1\) Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 35.
5. Conclusions

The local art scene reached a peak in terms of activity and diversity of art production in 1987, but its expansion stopped after the collapse of the financial markets precipitated a recession experienced with exceptional intensity in Perth. This chapter studied the local art scene a decade later, focusing on the most significant changes that occurred amidst the strained economic conditions and in response to globalisation forces even stronger than those that had shaped the cultural sphere of the 1980s.

An opening, or reorientation, towards the international scene was one of the most striking changes observed in Perth in 1997, especially among the official institutions of art. At a fundamental level, this change had to do with the continued expansion of capitalism that favoured ever-increasing financial, commercial and cultural exchanges. More specifically in the Australian artistic field, the international reorientation responded, at least in part, to the economic and cultural policies the Commonwealth Government implemented in an effort to counteract the effects of the recession.

One of the most significant economic policies consisted in promoting international trade, particularly with the growing economies of the Asian region.814 This economic strategy was backed by projects seeking to establish closer cultural ties with Asian countries such as the creation of the Asia-Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery and the planning of a Living Centre for Australia and the Indian Ocean Rim at AGWA.

In Perth, where locality was the concept at the centre of exhibitions and other cultural events in 1987, a decade later the largest exhibitions seen at AGWA came from overseas. Even an exhibition dedicated to a local issue treated by local artists, Daughters of the Dreaming, was framed by the

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814 Devery and Wallis, “Every Brilliant Eye: Australian Art of the 1990s.”
simultaneous display of an international exhibition with a feminist perspective. This is not to say that the appreciation of the artworks in *Daughters of the Dreaming* did not benefit from the international context. The point is that the specifically local features of artworks made in Perth were no longer the central concern of the exhibition.

Perhaps the artists that benefited the most of the opening towards the international scene were those who approached artmaking in an experimental or innovative manner. The exhibitions *Penumbrae* and *Material Perfection* are illuminating examples of how well-considered links to international developments contributed to the appreciation of local practices. The display of Western Australian works next to international examples in *Material Perfection* was one strategy that aided in establishing the quality of the local product, but there were others also effective in bringing to the fore the significance of local art in a global context. *Penumbrae*, for instance, showed only works created by Perth artists, yet they explored broad and profound cultural issues relevant to audiences in many centres around the globe. It is not a coincidence that artists working in this manner, such as sculptors Jon Tarry and James Angus, went on to have international careers.

If the effects of the recession were devastating for the Australian artistic field, by 1997 there were signs of recovery in Perth. The signs were most visible among the few exclusive galleries that catered to collectors. The successful marketing mix of these galleries still included a form of residual modernism consisting in abstract paintings inspired by the natural world (Fig 5.3), but the figurative or stylised landscapes that had predominated for decades in the local market disappeared from the walls of high-end galleries. By this time, the main commodity promoted at these galleries was art of a postmodernist nature, which can be divided broadly into two types. The first type is represented by the figurative paintings of artists who having started their careers in the 1980s were established figures by 1997 (Fig 5.4). The other type of postmodernist art quoted certain features of geometric abstraction (Fig 5.6). The formal vocabulary of minimal art (Fig 5.28) also reappeared in the 1990s, but in many instances it was appropriated in a postmodern fashion for critical comments on contemporary society rather than as a purely aesthetic device.

1997 also marked a crucial change in the local art scene when *Daughters of the Dreaming* opened at AGWA. It was the first time the work of local Aboriginal artists was at the centre of an exhibition shown in the State’s premier venue for the visual arts, confirmation of their new status within the artistic field. The prolonged process leading to this event started in the 1970s with Noongar painter Shane Pickett exhibiting occasionally in small galleries specialised in Aboriginal art. The process accelerated after Picket and a handful of other Perth-based Aboriginal artists gained access first to art schools and eventually to mainstream commercial galleries where their work was displayed.
alongside the work of settler artists. This professional training gave Aboriginal artists the tools and the world view, the habitus, which enabled them not only to function in the Perth art scene but also, and perhaps more importantly in a postcolonial setting, to deploy art conventions in a critical manner to advance their political claims.
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

As stated in the Introduction, this thesis provides an account of the development of the visual arts in Perth in the second half of the twentieth century. To chart this development, I built on Pierre Bourdieu’s methodology for the study of cultural production, especially on his concept of the artistic field. Modelling the Perth art scene as an artistic field has allowed me to use the relational properties of Bourdieu’s concept to place local art production in a broad social, cultural and economic context. My study includes an aspect of the local scene not considered in previous art historical narratives, namely art made by Perth-based Aboriginal artists. Supporting Damian Skinner’s claim that cultural practices in settler societies are better understood by taking into account the implications of settler colonialism, I would argue that my examination of settler and Aboriginal art within the same comprehensive framework has illuminated our understanding of both.

My investigation started by exploring the very basic, emerging artistic field that existed in the small city that was Perth in the 1950s (Fig 1.1). Up to that point, art in Perth had evolved mostly by looking inwardly and by producing regional landscapes that satisfied the expectations of the local public. Except for the admiration for similar imagery created in the east of Australia, very little else caught the attention of this public. However, by 1953 signs of a desire for a new and different kind of art had started to appear. The impulse for change came, to a large extent, from the disruptions caused by World War II. In the first place, a large number of educated European émigrés arrived in Perth fleeing the war; some had trained as artists and a handful were familiar with modernist art. Within a decade, a number of them became influential figures participating in cultural activities and promoting modern art. Although a couple of them taught painting - notably German-born Elise Blumann and Polish-born Henry Froudist – their most enduring influence on the local art scene came through their association with the Art Group. As discussed in Chapter One, Section 3, this group was very effective in supporting the promotion of modernist art at AGWA. Secondly, three Western Australians who had trained in British art schools - Guy Grey-Smith, Howard Taylor and Robert Juniper - returned to practice their craft in Perth after the end of the war. They brought with them more than technical skills. They brought a professional habitus fashioned by the new attitude that appeared among the younger generation of British artists seeking to revitalise, to modernise in the post-war years what they saw as insular and outdated in British art. But their approach to

815 In 1954, there were 6389 Italians, 4532 Dutch, 2214 Poles, 1251 Yugoslavs, 1096 Greeks, 1075 Germans, 1019 Latvians, 698 Ukrainians, 502 Hungarians, 338 Lithuanians, 248 Estonians, 236 Czechoslovaks and 1334 stateless persons living in the Perth metropolitan area. Gregory, City of Light, 59.
modernism consisted in attempting to create a new kind of art without breaking completely with the past, an update rather than a radical shattering of tradition. On their return to Perth, the local artists practicing this type of tamed modernism found a congenial public of cultural producers eager to support them: art patrons familiar with early European modernism, an art critic conversant with British criticism and a newly appointed director of the only art gallery in town, who had also studied in Britain in the immediate post-war years.

Not surprisingly, the influence of these artists on the local scene has been considerable for they established a model on how to be a ‘modern artist’ in Perth and produced the first recognised examples of the local version of late modernism (Figs 1.9 and 2.10), which consisted chiefly in landscapes, but this time modernist, abstracted landscapes. Their reputation was confirmed by the academics affiliated to UWA who began writing art criticism in the 1960s. Bourdieu’s analysis of the functioning of the artistic field clarifies how the value of the work of art depends in great measure on the symbolic meanings circulated by the discourses of critics, academics, collectors and connoisseurs, that is, by individuals with recognised credentials in the field. In this case, the writing of the UWA critics validated local modernist works as objects of academic study and increased their artistic value by interpreting them according to the criteria of aesthetic and philosophic discourses that addressed a restricted public. In this way they started to delineate an autonomous artistic field, an area of cultural production capable of establishing its own evaluative criteria. At the same time that it gained academic recognition, the economic viability of the local version of modernism was boosted by the appearance of commercial galleries, which contributed to educate a public for contemporary art and, more importantly, created a market offering a level of financial support hitherto unknown by Perth artists.

Rather than in painting, it is in architecture and sculpture that we can find a more complete expression of the ideals of modernity in the 1960s. Although local architecture was as indebted as painting to British modernism, via training in Britain, the model in this case was more original for British architects found novel solutions and caught up with international trends amid the intense reconstruction activity undertaken in Britain after the war. In Perth, the new buildings completed in the early 1960s, many as part of the preparations for the 1962 Commonwealth Games, transformed the city’s outlook while articulating in concrete and glass its aspirations to become a modern metropolis (Fig 2.3). These buildings provided an ideal environment for the first flourishing of local sculpture, which complemented and enhanced them by adopting a similarly simplified formal

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vocabulary. From these auspicious beginnings, sculpture has developed as one of the most innovative art forms in Perth.

While abstracted landscapes became the type of art consumed by the restricted public with the cultural capital needed to appreciate them, the majority of the Perth public still preferred recognisable landscapes in the 1960s. This large section of the market appreciated the style of regional landscapes painted by Perth-based Noongar artists (Fig 2.21). Unfortunately, many of those artists were based in Perth because they were incarcerated in Fremantle Prison, a tragic consequence of the colonial policies of assimilation. As discussed in the sections on Aboriginal art in Chapters One, Two and Three, the most devastating of these policies was the separation of children from their families. Interned in government settlements, the children were trained as labourers and forced to learn the way of life of the Australian settlers. Unsurprisingly, the trauma of such harsh treatment led to life-long problems of social inclusion. Yet despite their marginal position, Noongar artists were able to establish a presence in the market but not through the institutions of the artistic field. Their marginal position is underlined by the fact that they did not gain access to art galleries until the 1980s when changes in Government policies concerning Aboriginal affairs began to produce concrete outcomes in the artistic field.

The implementation of Government policies in key cultural areas had far reaching effects in the artistic field in the 1970s, especially the transfer of art training from the system of vocational education to institutions of higher education and the implementation of a policy of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs that intended to replace the previous policy of assimilation. The new art-training arrangements formed artists in an academic atmosphere that enforced professional standards recognised by peers. In Perth, the most visible and enduring effects of the new system of art training appeared in sculpture. Recently graduated British sculptors, familiar with the new materials, techniques and philosophical approaches to art that literally took sculpture down from its plinth, came to teach at WAIT where they trained a generation of sculptors equipped with the dispositions to explore the possibilities and limits of their practice. This experimental disposition led Perth sculptors to produce installations and multimedia work in the 1980s. In the 1970s, though, local sculptors adopted the minimalist vocabulary of their British counterparts. But not all the inspiration for sculpture came directly from Britain. Howard Taylor started to work in a reductionist manner in the 1950s and by the 1970s was producing extremely simplified sculptures (Figs 3.10 and 3.11). Although by this stage he was the best-known Perth sculptor, his minimalist paintings had to wait for the neo-minimalist revival of the 1990s to receive the same recognition. This disparity can
be interpreted as an indication of the more problematic reception of new practices in painting than in sculpture in the Perth art scene.

The 1970s saw the gradual ending of the dominance of the late-modernist aesthetic in the local art scene and its replacement for more critical approaches to artmaking, but a precise moment in 1975 can be seen as emblematic of the whole process. It was the last exhibition of local modernist paintings at the Skinner Galleries, the pioneer of commercial galleries that almost single-handedly developed the market for this type of art in Perth. Nearly at the same time, Praxis, a group formed by graduates of the new art training system and some of their British teachers, opened the doors of the first alternative gallery to operate in Perth. In this alternative space, Praxis staged the kind of adventurous art practices which commercial galleries could not afford to show. So the closing of the premier space for modernist art coincided with the formation of a group dedicated to encourage engagement with critical and experimental forms of art that questioned the ideology of modernism. The Praxis Gallery, though, was not the only place that exhibited innovative forms of art in the 1970s but it was symptomatic of the conditions that favoured new approaches to artmaking such as conceptual art. Two of the best-known Perth artists of the second half of the twentieth century, Miriam Stannage and Brian Blanchflower, came to the attention of public and critics in the 1970s when they exhibited work that had little to do with the modernist landscapes which predominated in the commercial and public galleries of the time. Stannage showed conceptual art for the first time in Perth in 1975 (Fig 3.20) while Blanchflower combined experimental painting, installations and performance art (Fig 4.21) in his practice of the late 1970s.

While the progressive government policies of the 1970s laid the groundwork for the flowering of the visual arts in the 1980s, the extraordinary influx of financial resources into the art market can be counted as a decisive factor that triggered the boom in art activity characteristic of this decade. The influence of economic forces on the cultural sphere, a hallmark of postmodernism, was particularly evident in Perth. Wealthy businessmen formed highly publicised collections by buying works of art at exorbitant prices, controlled entertainment and media conglomerates, and participated in the governance of the official institutions of art as well.

The abundance of private and public resources allowed AGWA to become a leading agent in the artistic field in the 1980s. With new premises inaugurated in 1979 and the means to hire professional staff, it expanded its research into the history of settler Western Australian art which informed the 1987 exhibitions Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950 and Among the Souvenirs: Western Australian Art in the Eighties. Given their fundamental role in constructing a regional art-historical narrative, these exhibitions can be seen as the most important exhibitions of
the 1980s for the history of art in Perth. Responding to the postmodern questioning of global narratives, the narrative in the AGWA exhibitions was framed within the parameters of the centre-periphery debates. Consequently, it privileged local experience and perspectives, ‘locality’ to use a term of the time, over references to the influence of practices originating in Europe and North America.

When market forces extended their reach into all aspects of cultural life in the 1980s, their influence on the artistic field did not go unopposed. Two groups of artists, Praxis and Media Space, adopted a critical stance to scrutinise the role of art in a consumer society. Once Praxis secured public funding for a new alternative space in 1981, it continued promoting experimental and critical approaches to artmaking until its amalgamation with PICA in 1988. For its part Media Space, the most radical art collective ever formed in Perth, worked at the interface of cutting-edge technology and critical postmodernism from 1981 to 1986. Members of both groups joined forces to make possible the establishment of PICA. A permanent legacy of the radicals of the 1980s, to this day PICA is an essential agent of the Perth artistic field dedicated exclusively to the promotion and exhibition of contemporary art in all its manifestations.

One of the striking outcomes of the policy of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs, which the Commonwealth Government started to implement in the 1970s, was the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB). Even though in order to gain a presence in the contemporary market and advance an agenda of economic support, the AAB concentrated initially in promoting art with a modernist appearance made in remote centres, in the late 1980s it began supporting the politically-oriented work of Aboriginal artists living in urban centres. By this time, the celebration of the 1988 Australian Bicentennial had brought Aboriginal rights and culture to the forefront of debates on national identity thus opening a space for Aboriginal art that contested the legacy of colonialism. In Perth, only Palyuku artist Sally Morgan created politically-charged images, but it is indicative of the changes that occurred in the 1980s that she found commercial outlets for her art. When art galleries proliferated in Perth due in large part to the extraordinary level of resources that circulated in the art market, a few of the new galleries specialised in Aboriginal art and although continuing to concentrate on the products from remote centres, they started to open their doors to artists like Morgan and the Noongar painters working within the conventions of the Carrolup tradition. More significantly, at about this time Perth-based Aboriginal artists gained access to art schools which was the key to their acceptance as members of the artistic field in the 1990s.

The rapid growth of the Perth art scene came to a sudden halt by the end of 1987 when the collapse of the financial markets provoked a global recession that affected the Western Australian economy.
especially hard. It took a decade for the economy to show signs of recovery. In the process, a move away from the preoccupation with locality, so evident in the art narratives of the 1980s, led to a reorientation towards an international context for local art practices. In a way, this shift responded to economic and cultural policies designed to aid the economic recovery by increasing international exchanges. At a deeper level, though the change had to do with the continued expansion of capitalism that favoured ever-increasing financial, commercial and cultural exchanges. Given their dependence on public funding, the reorientation towards the international scene was most evident among the official institutions of art. Whereas the most important exhibitions at AGWA in 1987 had focused on settler Western Australian art, a decade later its largest exhibitions came from overseas. Even in the commercial sector, which showed mostly locally-made work, it was clear that artists who exhibited in the leading commercial galleries were well aware of recent international trends. Thus examples of the postmodernist revivals of geometric abstraction and minimalist art appeared frequently in the most exclusive Perth galleries of the 1990s.

Two distinct and effective strategies that contributed to the appreciation of local achievement in a broad international context were deployed in the exhibitions seen in Perth in 1997. In the exhibition Material Perfection, curator John Stringer emphasised the creative departures of the local artists who used minimalist devices for their own critical and aesthetic purposes by displaying their work alongside examples by some of the best-known exponents of the original minimalist movement. The second strategy, employed by curator Marco Marcon in the exhibition Penumbrae, consisted in showing only work produced by Perth artists but treating broad and profound cultural issues, relevant to global audiences. In the case at hand, the philosophical premise of Penumbrae contrasted aesthetic appreciation and the pragmatic use of art in everyday life. It is not fortuitous that artists working in this manner, such as sculptors Jon Tarry and James Angus went on to have international careers.

Confirmed by the exhibition Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong (Daughters of the Dreaming) the recognition of local Aboriginal artists as members of the artistic field can be considered one the most significant changes observed in the local scene in 1990s. Daughters of the Dreaming marked the first time an Indigenous person curated an exhibition at AGWA and also, but not by coincidence, the first time Aboriginal art made in Perth was the subject of an exhibition at the premier space for the visual arts in Western Australia. Above all, it was for its singular engagement with the consequences of colonisation that Daughters of the Dreaming broke new ground, at least in Perth. The women artists represented in this exhibition confronted the public with the pain caused by the colonial policies of assimilation in such a forceful manner that their work can properly be
characterised as a form of Aboriginal activism. The quality and the impact of the work on display unequivocally demonstrated the professional standing of Perth-based Aboriginal artists, who having mastered the conventions of settler art were in a position to use it to advance political claims.

After the long journey from the small art scene of the 1950s to the postmodern, more inclusive and globally-oriented Perth scene of the 1990s, after all the changes charted, one theme seemed to persist and survive as the central motif for local artists at the turn of century, the natural environment. Even though the most-recognised artists of the 1990s, Howard Taylor (Fig 5.19), Brian Blanchflower (5.29) and Miriam Stannage (Fig 5.30) had adopted a similar neo-minimalist approach to art by this stage, their work is emblematic of the persistence of place and the influence of the natural environment in art made in Perth. Yet if at the close of the millennium established artists still looked first to the landscape in search of a structure to convey the symbolic meanings they sought to share with their public, among the younger generation of artists - such as James Angus (Fig 5.25) and Virginia Ward (Fig 5.28) - the natural world lost its appeal as main source of inspiration, instead their started to explore broad and profound cultural themes with implications for the functioning of the interconnected societies of this century.
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2002
APPENDIX 1: EXHIBITIONS IN PERTH IN 1953

Art Gallery Of Western Australia

Beaufort St, Perth

Nov 1952-Mar        Twelve Contemporary English Paintings (lent by the National Gallery of Victoria)
April-May           Reproductions of drawings by Leonardo da Vinci
July-Aug            Annual Art Competition. 74 paintings
8 Sep-4 Oct         French Painting Today. 119 paintings and 4 tapestries

Newspaper House Art Gallery

125 St George’s Terrace. This site is known as Brookfield Place since 2012

7-17 January  Kathleen Brierley from Albany. Watercolours
20-31 January Maria Mannino from Sicily. Religious paintings
18-28 Feb     Nancy Fowler. Watercolours
5-14 March    M. McNeill’s collection of Australian paintings
18 March      Anne Creed and Janet Bayliss. Oils and watercolours
15-24 April  Gladys M Freeth flower studies. Watercolours
28 April      E.F.Sweeting, Geoff Ridley and A. Karafylakis. Oils and watercolours
12-23 May     Langon Heap and P.W.Tassell. Oils and watercolours
27 May-6 Jun  Guy Grey-Smith . Paintings and pottery
10-20 June    Alan Stubbs. Watercolours
22 June       Elizabeth Durack, Eileen Keys and Hilda Stephens. Paintings, pottery and weaving
8 July        WA Society of Arts. Paintings and woodcuts
17-28 Aug     Ethel Sanders. Watercolours
2 September   Cyril Ross and Geoff Wilson. Paintings
15-26 Sep     Perth Society of Artists .Oils, watercolours and sculpture
12-24 Oct     George Benson. Watercolours
26 Oct -7 Nov Audrey Greenhalgh. Oils
9 November    Geoff Ridley, A. Karafylakis and H. Smeed. Paintings and etchings
16-21 Nov     James Goatcher. Watercolours
8 December    Claude Hotchin Art Prize. Oils and watercolours
### Adult Education Rooms

3 Howard St. Known at the time as Adult Education Gallery or Room

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Medium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 April</td>
<td>John Wilson</td>
<td>Watercolours</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 July</td>
<td>Robert Juniper and Patricia Jordanoff</td>
<td>Oils and sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-17 Aug</td>
<td>Ernest Philpot</td>
<td>Oils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Oct</td>
<td>David Lawrance</td>
<td>Paintings and drawings</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-21 Nov</td>
<td>Portia Bennett</td>
<td>Watercolours</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Nov-12 Dec</td>
<td>Marshall Clifton</td>
<td>Watercolours</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-19 Dec</td>
<td>Leonard James Green</td>
<td>Oils and drawings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Boans Fashion Gallery

Boans Department Store operated from 1895 to 1986 and was located in Wellington St at the site known as Forrest Chase since 1989.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>Margaret Dunn</td>
<td>Oils and watercolours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-31 Oct</td>
<td>Douglas Bland</td>
<td>Oils, watercolours and drawings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: EXHIBITIONS IN PERTH IN 1962

Western Australian Art Gallery
Beaufort St, Perth

28 Dec-21 Jan   Russian Graphic Art. 146 prints including lithographs, woodcuts and line prints
22 Jan-12 Feb   Children’s Art. Festival of Perth in collaboration with Education Department
14-21 Feb       Modern Chinese Scroll paintings. Festival of Perth exhibition
7 Apr-20 May    Pre-Raphaelite Art. 90 works: paintings, drawings, engravings, tapestries, chintzes and designs for wall-paper
May             Architecture Week Exhibition. Architectural plans, photographs and models
22Aug-11 Sep    Japanese Prints arranged by the Yoseido Gallery of Tokyo for all Australian
                State Galleries
24 Sep -24 Oct  Australian Painting: Colonial-Impressionist-Contemporary. Arranged by the
                Commonwealth Government through the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board
27 October      Painters’ Progress an exhibition of the various facets of development of
                Lawrence Daws, Guy Grey-Smith, Robert Juniper and Howard Taylor
3 November      Western Australian potters: Flora Landells, Eileen Keys, Guy Grey-Smith and
                Heather McSwain
22 Nov- 1 Dec   Special exhibitions for the period of the VII British Empire and Commonwealth
                Games:
                Early Views of Western Australia
                Australian Contemporary Painting
                Australian Wildflowers
                Art in Western Australia
                Australian Traditional Painting
                Australian Ceramics
                Aboriginal Bark Paintings from the gallery collection
**Skinner Galleries**

31 Malcolm St, West Perth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exhibition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-20 January</td>
<td>Donald Friend. Paintings. Festival of Perth exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Jan-3 Feb</td>
<td>Festival of Perth Prize. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17 February</td>
<td>Modern Furniture and Furnishings (Danish and Norwegian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 February</td>
<td>Sculpture by Inge King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Mar-7 Apr</td>
<td>Robert Juniper and Robert Gleghorn. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Apr-12 May</td>
<td>Guy and Helen Grey-Smith. Paintings, pottery and textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-19 May</td>
<td>Sam Fullbrook. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-28 May</td>
<td>Perth Society of Artists. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-16 June</td>
<td>Peter Kaiser. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-30 June</td>
<td>Valerie and Cedric Baxter. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-28 July</td>
<td>Old European prints from the collection of Mr Arthur Chard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jul-11 Aug</td>
<td>Ernest Philpot. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-26 Sep</td>
<td>Lawrence Daws. Paintings in oils and watercolours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-20 October</td>
<td>Frank Norton, oil paintings, and Audrey Norton, ceramics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-27 October</td>
<td>Winners of the Robin Hood contest. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-24 November</td>
<td>Commonwealth Games Art Prize Exhibition. 53 paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Nov-22 Dec</td>
<td>Sidney Nolan. 29 paintings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hovea Gallery**

Room 11, First Floor, Wellington Building, 158 William St, Perth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exhibition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Jan-12 Feb</td>
<td>Doreen Ling and Lucille Collins. Portraits, still-life and landscapes in oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24 February</td>
<td>Reuben Morales. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Feb-10 Mar</td>
<td>Garry Smith. Oil paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-23 March</td>
<td>Margot Walker and Chris King. Oil paintings and watercolours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-31 March</td>
<td>Lurline Iverson. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March-6 Apr</td>
<td>Brenda Fitzgerald. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20 April</td>
<td>John W Parkinson. Paintings, mostly Perth scenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Apr-4 May</td>
<td>Hazel Smith. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-18 May</td>
<td>Aurelie Yeo. Oil paintings and watercolours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May-1 June       Frederick Charles Preshaw. Paintings
9-22 June        Gordon Binsted, R Mutzow and R Bosman. Paintings
23-29 June       Malcolm Fletcher. Landscapes in oils
13 July          Mary Sullivan. Landscapes and still lifes
21 Jul-3 Aug     Geraldine Thompson. Portraits in oils
11-17 Aug        Robert Carter. Oil paintings
1-15 September   John Kluyt, Dutch artist based in Geraldton. Oil paintings
15-21 Sep        Mixed Anniversary Exhibition. Paintings
22 September     Irma Reiters. Oil paintings and pencil drawings
6-19 October     Elsie Johnson and Adrian Egan. Watercolours
20 Oct-2 Nov     Muriel Aitken. Pastels and watercolours
3-16 November    Oscar Beattie. Oil paintings and watercolours
17 November      Group exhibition of paintings in oils and watercolours
1-7 December     Aurelie Yeo, Garry Smith, John Kluyt. Paintings

Claude Hotchin Gallery

2nd floor, Boans Department Store, Wellington Street, Perth

30 Jan-9 Feb     Paula Newman. Paintings
10 March         Religious paintings from a national contest
16 March         Singapore Academy of Arts
28 Apr-11 May   Sunyee, Chinese artist from Singapore
28 May-2 Jun    Cottesloe Camera Club Annual Exhibition. Photographs
5-15 June       Garry Smith. Paintings
2-13 July       Helena Rubinstein Portrait Prize 1962. Fifty entries
31 Jul-10 Aug   WA Society of Artists. Paintings
13-24 Aug       S. A. Smith. Paintings
28 Aug-7 Sep    Charles Broughton. Paintings and drawings
26 Sep-3 Oct    Claude Hotchin Art Prize. 83 paintings
14-30 November  Alan Stubbs. Watercolours
24-30 November  May Thomas. Terracotta sculptures and ceramics
Adult Education Rooms

3 Howard St, Perth

7 April  Frances McDaniell oils and Frank Owen watercolours. Advanced students
Mid-April  Grace Milne. Ceramics
5 May  Frances Appleton. Paintings
2-16 June  Simon Kay. Paintings
2-30 June  Garry Smith. Oil paintings. Advanced second year student
21 July  Oil paintings by senior students
11 August  Elsie Broad. Oil paintings and watercolours
1 September  Terry Jeffers. Oil paintings. Second year student
22 September  Bekir Bielak. Landscapes in watercolours. First-year student
29 Sep-6 Oct  Lynette Bates. Paintings
14-20 October  Sue James. Watercolours. First year student
27 Oct-21 Nov  Joan Scott, Roy Weston and Hans Grotegoed. Paintings. First year students
22 Nov-1 Dec  Games Show. Students of Henry Froudist’s eight Adult Education Board classes

Patch Theatre Foyer

267 William St, Perth

5 September  Paintings by six members of the Perth Society of Artists: Geoffrey and Jenny Allen, Audrey Greenhalgh, Bryant McDiven, Kath Jarvis and Margaret Bailey
1-18 October  Paintings by four members of WA Society of Arts: Newman, Haynes, Wilson and Carter
20-26 October  George Haynes. Drawings and oil paintings
Perth Univision Centre

12 St George’s Terrace

1-14 June  Perth Univision Society of Arts. Paintings, pottery, sculpture and handcrafts
3-15 September  J.M. Krijger. Drawings
27 October  G. D. Machin. Drawings and cartoons
16 November  Arts and crafts for the Games period. Painting, sculpture and pottery
15 December  Nigel David. Oil paintings and pastels

Perth Town Hall

Corner of Hay and Barrack Streets

16-27 January  Through British Eyes. Travel books, British Council Exhibition. Festival of Perth exhibition
20-31 August  Elaine Haxton. Paintings

Pastoral House

Roof studio, 156 St George’s Terrace

7-9 November  Flora Landells. Pottery and watercolours

The Studio

40 The Avenue, Nedlands

14 November  Margaret Sheen and associates. Pottery
APPENDIX 3: ART GALLERIES IN PERTH 1975

PUBLIC GALLERIES

Western Australian Art Gallery, Beaufort St, Perth
Fremantle Arts Centre, 1 Finnerty St, Fremantle
Undercroft Gallery, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley

COMMERCIAL GALLERIES

Art Cellars, 37 Barrack St, Perth
Churchill Gallery, 67 Coghlan Rd, Subiaco
Collector’s Gallery, 298 Hay St, Subiaco (formerly John Gild Gallery)
Colonial Art Centre, 43 Rockingham Rd, Rockingham
Cremorne Gallery, 572 Hay St, Perth
Desborough Art Galleries, 1163 Hay St, West Perth, closed in May
Fleur Gallery, 881 Beaufort St, Inglewood
Lister Gallery, Lister House 252 St George’s Terrace later at 248-250 St George’s Terrace, Perth
Megalong Gallery, Old York Rd, Greenmouth
Old Fire Station Gallery, 4 McCourt St, Leederville
Robin Phillips Galleries, Wymond Rd, Roleystone
Roundhouse Studio Gallery, 43 Stirling Hwy, North Fremantle
Skinner Galleries, 31 Malcolm St, Perth
Ventnor Gallery, Hay St and Ventnor Ave, West Perth, closed in May
Waterway Farm Studio, 21-mile peg South-West Hwy, Armadale

SPECIALIST GALLERIES

Dickey & Bogue Art Gallery, 343 Hay St, Subiaco
Craft House, 34 Cliff St, Fremantle
Aboriginal Traditional Arts Gallery, 242 St George’s Terrace, Perth

ARTIST-RUN GALLERY

Praxis Gallery, Andy’s Arcade, Hay St, Perth
APPENDIX 4: EXHIBITIONS IN PERTH IN 1975 (SELECTED GALLERIES)

Western Australian Art Gallery

11 Dec-27 Jan  
Art of the Victorian Era Paintings. Watercolours, glassware, and ceramics from the permanent collection

7 Feb-23 Mar  
Adventure in Swedish Glass. Glass pieces by artists of Kosta Boda and Orrefors in Sweden

21 Feb-3 Mar  
Fifth City of Perth National Photographic Exhibition. Annual exhibition held in conjunction with the Festival of Perth

7 Apr-4 May  
Tamarind: Homage to Lithography. Prints from the American Tamarind School of Lithography

11 Apr-25 May  

7-23 May  
Aspects of Australian Photography. Six Australian photographers

26 May-2 Jun  
Western Australian Artists 1960-1975. Paintings by Western Australians held in conjunction with WA Week 1975

6-29 June  
Women Artists. Paintings, sculpture, ceramics and weaving by women artists from the permanent collection in recognition of International Women’s Year

18-31 July  
American Glass. Glass pieces by America’s leading glass artists

7-31 Aug  
Bauhaus Exhibition. Prints, drawings, facsimiles and models of furniture and architectural design

8-31 Aug  
German Watercolours, drawings and prints. Held in conjunction with the Bauhaus exhibition. Works from the permanent collection and loans from Dr Roy Constable

30 Oct-30 Nov  
TVW Young Artists’ Awards. WA art students’ work in all media. Prize money $2000 donated by TVW

23 Oct-23 Nov  
Festival Designs of Inigo Jones. Drawings for scenery and costumes for the Court Masques of James I and Charles I

6-30 Nov  
Print Exhibition by Printmakers Association of WA

27 Nov-21 Dec  
Australian Contemporary Jewellery

17 Dec-8 Feb  
Graphic Work by Whistler and his Associates
### Undercroft Gallery, The University of Western Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 January</td>
<td>Art students of Claremont Technical School. Paintings, drawings and prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 Feb</td>
<td>Romanian art. Pottery, wool tapestries, paintings on glass and on wood, graphics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gouaches and watercolours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–26 Feb</td>
<td>Contemporary German artists. 75 drawings. Organised by the Goethe Institute,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Feb-1 Mar</td>
<td>The Selective Eye. Works from Western Australian private collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>Vlase Zanalis. 90 paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-21 Jun</td>
<td>Sri Chinmoy, Indian Yogi. Jahnra Kala paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-9 Aug</td>
<td>Annual Guild Exhibition. Works by local artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-18 Aug</td>
<td>Photographs and photocopies of Franz Kafka’s documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-29 Aug</td>
<td>Art of the Western Desert. 30 Papunya paintings by 12 artists from the Aranda,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pintubi and Walbiri peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-20 Sep</td>
<td>Works from the University Art Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-7 October</td>
<td>Murdoch University Art Prize. 46 Paintings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Skinner Galleries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 February</td>
<td>Mary Rennell. Paintings and drawings. Festival of Perth exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-28 Feb</td>
<td>Lawrence Daws. Paintings. Festival of Perth exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Mar-13 Apr</td>
<td>Hal Missingham. Watercolours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-27 April</td>
<td>Brian Yates. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-25 May</td>
<td>Robert Juniper. Recent paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 May-5 Jun</td>
<td>George Haynes. Recent Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 June</td>
<td>Thomas Yeo (Singaporean artist). Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jun-9 Jul</td>
<td>James Gleeson. “Figure in Psychoscope.” Miniature paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 July-8 Aug</td>
<td>Cedric Baxter. “Asia revisited.” 20 paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Sep-3 Oct</td>
<td>Ben Joel. Oil paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-24 Oct</td>
<td>Josh Partridge (Welsh artist). Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Oct-14 Nov</td>
<td>Geoffrey Wake. Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Nov-3 Dec</td>
<td>Garry Zeck. Paintings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 December  Christmas exhibition: Allan Baker, William Boissevain, Robert Juniper, Ben Joel, Peter Kordyl, Bryant McDiven, Brian McKay, Hal Missingham, Josh Partridge, Geoffrey Wake, Garry Zeck, George Haynes

Lister Gallery

1-16 Feb  Matthew Perceval. Paintings. Melbourne painter son of John Perceval. Festival of Perth exhibition
19 Feb-7 Mar  Lloyd Rees. Paintings. Festival of Perth exhibition
29 Jul-10 Aug  Basil Hadley. Gouaches and oils
16-22 Aug  Exhibition organised by the Speech and Hearing Association. Prints by Sydney Nolan and paintings by John Feeney, Robert Dickerson and David Boyd
2-12 Dec  James Holmyard (Queensland artist). Paintings
16-28 Dec  Fiona Heysen. Paintings

Old Fire Station Gallery

2 Feb – 1 Mar  Recent Work by Guy Grey-Smith. 9 paintings and 35 drawings
2-16 March  Marie Hobbs. 30 paintings
22 Mar-7 Apr  Ashley Jones. Paintings and prints
13-30 April  Mona Stokes, Maxine Veitch and Kath Trendall. Functional Weaving
4-21 May  Greg Stephen. Paintings
25 May -11 Jun  Miriam Stannage. Paintings
15-27 June  Chris Capper. Paintings
6-21 July  Bob Birch. 21 paintings and 8 drawings
10-18 August  Helen Grey-Smith. Paintings
7-24 Sep  Robert Bell. Tapestries, ceramics
28 Sep-14 Oct  Anne Maughan. Paintings
19-30 Oct  Maria Phillips. Ceramics
9-26 Nov  Guy Grey-Smith. Woodcuts, etchings and pottery
30 Nov-17 Dec  Stephen Brunst. Jewellery, ceramics and pottery
Desborough Galleries

3-14 Feb  Les Kossatz. Sculpture, paintings and prints. Festival of Perth exhibition
17 Feb-1 Mar  W.A. Sculptors’ Association. Drawings
13-23 March  Renoir. 20 etchings and lithographs
25 Mar-9 Apr  Hans Arkeveld and David Hughes. Sculpture and painting

Praxis Gallery

June  First Group Show: Marc Betts, Brian Blanchflower, Geoff Buchan, Mark Grey-Smith, Judy and Douglas Chambers
26 July  Theo Koning. From Winter Storm. Installation
1-19 Oct  Geoff Buchan. Paintings and films
2 December  Hal Colebatch. Poetry reading
19 Dec-4 Jan  Neil Hollis. Prints, drawings and paintings
APPENDIX 5: ART GALLERIES IN PERTH 1987

PUBLIC GALLERIES

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Cultural Centre
Fremantle Arts Centre, 1 Finnerty St, Fremantle
Fremantle Art Gallery, 1-9 Short St, Fremantle
Praxis Gallery, 33 Pakenham St, Fremantle
Undercroft Gallery, University of Western Australia

COMMERCIAL GALLERIES

Aboriginal Arts Australia, Markalinga House, 251 St Georges Terrace, Perth
Alexander Galleries, 12 Aberdeen St, Northbridge
Atwell Gallery, 586 Canning Hwy, Alfred Cove
Bannister Street Craftworks, Bannister St, Fremantle
Birukmarri Gallery, 47 High St, Fremantle
Black Swan Gallery, 42 Henry St, Fremantle
Bortignon’s Kalamunda Gallery of Man, Snowball Rd, Kalamunda
Captured on Canvas Gallery, 7th floor 172 St George’s Terrace, Perth
Central Australian Aboriginal Art Gallery, William St, Fremantle
Colmorie Pottery, Carradine Rd, Armadale
Colonial Art Centre, 131 Rockingham Rd, Rockingham Beach
Crafts Council Gallery, 1st floor, Perth Railway Station, Wellington St, Perth
Egan Gallery, 20 Brook Rd, Darlington
Foothills Gallery, 43 Great Eastern Hwy, Bellevue
Galerie Dusseldorf, 890 Hay St, Perth
Gallery 52, Trades Hall Building, 74 Beaufort St, Northbridge
Gallery 514, 514 Guildford Rd, Bayswater
Gallery Australia, 96 Fitzgerald St, Northbridge
The Gallery of Original Arts and Artifacts, Croke Lane and Cliff St, Fremantle
Glyde Gallery, Glyde St, Mosman Park
Gomboc Gallery, 50 James Rd, Middle Swan
Goodridge Galleries, 239 Beaufort St, Perth
Greenhill Galleries, Howard St, Perth
Hawks Hill Gallery, Goollelal Drive, Kingsley
Hills Art Gallery, Corner Stirk St and Railway Rd, Kalamunda
Indigo 119, 119 Broadway, Nedlands
Kooranga Craft Gallery, 476 Dale Place, West Perth
Lauder and Howard’s Gallery, corner George St and Duke St, East Fremantle
Lister Gallery, 248 St George’s Terrace, Perth
New Collectables Gallery, corner Tuam St and Albany Hwy, Victoria Park
Oriental Gallery, Orange Rd, Darlington
Pash’s Odyssey Gallery, Suite 37 Fremantle Mall complex, Fremantle
Perth Potters’ Club, 1 Burt St, Cottesloe
Phillips Galleries and Pottery, Wymond Rd, Roleystone
Prism Art Galleries, 21-23 Pakenham St, Fremantle
Ric’s Gallery, Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith
Royal Commonwealth Society, 183 Roberts Rd, Subiaco
Shards Craft Studio, 168 Canning Hwy, East Fremantle
Silver Street Studio, Silver St, South Fremantle
The South of the River Potters’ Club, Silas St, East Fremantle
Threlfall Galleries, 10 km south of Mandurah on Old Coast Rd
Tresillian Community Centre, corner Tyrell St and Edward St, Nedlands
Waterway Farm Studio and Gallery, South West Hwy, Armadale

ARTIST-RUN GALLERY

The Beach Gallery, 42 Beaufort St, Northbridge

OTHER EXHIBITION SPACES

Film and Television Institute, 92 Adelaide St, Fremantle
Claremont School of Art, Princess Road, Claremont
APPENDIX 6: EXHIBITIONS IN PERTH IN 1987 (SELECTED GALLERIES)

Art Gallery of Western Australia

25 Oct-22 Feb Threads of Gold. Textiles from West Sumatra from the Christensen Fund Collection
25 Oct-7 Apr Crafts of the 80s. Australian, European and American works from the collection
25 Oct-7 Apr Wedgwood. Ceramics from the late 18th century to the 1930s from the collection
29 Nov-4 Jan Art from the Great Sandy Desert. New paintings from Balgo, Western Australia
6 Dec-13 Jan Australia: Impressions of a Landscape. Photographs by Richard Woldendorp
11 Dec-21 Jan America: Art and the West. Paintings and sculptures from the 19th and 20th centuries. Organised by the International Cultural Corporation of Australia
17 Dec-18 Jan In Full View, Ultra large Polaroid Photographs. Eight Australian and five international photographers
15 Jan-29 Mar Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950. Paintings, prints, drawings and watercolours by over 50 local artists
17 Jan-2 Mar Picturing Western Australia. Photographs from the 1930s and 1940s by Axel Poignant, Hal Missingham and members of the Van Raalte Club
28 Jan-8 Mar Moet & Chandon Touring Exhibition of Contemporary Art. Works by the 20 finalists in the Moet & Chandon Art Fellowship
5 Feb-27 Mar Skin Deep. Landscape paintings by four contemporary Australian artists: Tim Storrier, Colin Lanceley, John Wolseley and Nosepeg Tjunkata Djuburula
6 Feb-12 Apr Aboriginal Art from the collection. Bark paintings and sculptures from Arnhem Land
13 Feb-29 Mar Among the Souvenirs: Expatriality, Distance and Contemporary Western Australian Art. Expatriality and regionalism in Western Australia, curated by Dr David Bromfield
5 Mar-9 Sep Art from India and Indonesia. Textiles, jewellery, stone, bronze and wooden sculptures from the Christensen Fund Collection
6 Mar-27 Apr Intaglio. Prints from the collection
11 Apr-21 Jun Nearly a Century: 95 Years of the Collection of Paintings at AGWA. Chronological display charting the growth of the collection and variations in acquisition policies
17 Apr-25 Oct Scandinavian Crafts and Design. Glass, ceramics, textiles, silver, furniture and metalwork from the collection
17 Apr-25 Oct Craft and Design. Historical and contemporary crafts and design, predominantly Australian, including works by Western Australian artists
25 April- Aboriginal Art. Permanent display of paintings and carvings from the collection
1 May - 14 Jun  Western Australian Drawings. Display designed to coincide with WA Week 1987. Drawings from 1950 to the present by Hans Arkeveld, Robert Juniper, Chris Malcolm, Ted Snell and Howard Taylor

23 Jun - 25 Jul  Mayakovsky: Twenty Years of Work. Original documents and graphics compiled by the Russian poet, artist, graphic designer and revolutionary Vladimir Mayakovsky

2 Jul - 16 Aug  Edward Munch: Death and Desire. One hundred lithographs, etchings and woodcuts

14 Jul - 28 Sep  Nineteenth Century French Graphics from the collection. Isabey, Daumier, Corot, Manet, Pissarro, Toulouse-Lautrec and Bonnard

15 - 20 August  Ginger Megs. Presented by the Children’s Book Council of Australia

26 Aug - 11 Oct  Drysdale the Photographer. Photographs by Sir Russell Drysdale

11 Sep - 12 Oct  Five from the Fifth. Five Australian artists selected by curator Rene Block to exhibit at the Daadgalerie, West Berlin. Richard Dunn, John Lethbridge, Mike Parr, Peter Tyndall and Ken Unsworth reconstructed their installations for an Australian tour

20 Sep - 18 Oct  Secondary School Art Award. Fourth annual art award organised by the Western Australian College of Advanced Education

3 Oct - 7 Dec  City, prints and drawings from the collection. Western Australian, Australian and international artists traced the changing relationship to the city

21 Oct - 29 Nov  Sidney Nolan: Landscape and Legends: A Retrospective Exhibition 1937-87. Organised by the National Gallery of Victoria, managed by the International Cultural Corporation of Australia

7 Nov - 15 Mar  Craft from the Collection

19 Nov - 20 Feb  Art from India. Sculptures from the Christensen Fund Collection

28 Nov - 17 Jan  The Work of Brian McKay. Over 70 paintings and prints, political posters and other documents

2 Dec - 31 Jan  About face. Self-portraits and portraits from the collection (works on paper)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>展覽名稱及內容</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Jan -2 Feb</td>
<td>New Faces, Six Western Australian Painters: Tom Alberts, Ivan Bray, Marie Haass, Jill Kempson, Michelle Sharpe, and David Westwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jan -2 Feb</td>
<td>Scenes in the Life of Julian Hospitator. Assemblage of figures and objects by artist-in-residence Thomas Hoareau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb -2 Mar</td>
<td>Imports. Video art, photographs and installations on the theme of imported ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb -2 Mar</td>
<td>Invisible Cities. Small scale works by national and international artists examining the idea of the cities we create in our minds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Mar -5 Apr</td>
<td>Video Praxis. Selected works from the Australian Video Festival, Sydney. Recent artists’ videotapes from Australia, Japan and Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Apr -10 May</td>
<td>Goji Hamada, Cheap Media Chips - Refraction. Installation and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May -9 Jun</td>
<td>Philip Burns. Exploring the Playground. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May -16 Jun</td>
<td>Paul Thomas. See it Be it. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 June</td>
<td>Peter Callas. Technology as Territory. Audio-visual work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Jun -7 Jul</td>
<td>Roger Pike and Mark Smith (Pneumonia). Feedback: The Politics and Structure of Mass Communications. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 June</td>
<td>Pat Brassington. Eight Easy Pieces. Photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Jun -14 Jul</td>
<td>Penny Bovell. Piecework. Installation, mixed media drawings on the idea of a “woman’s place”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jul -3 Aug</td>
<td>Valerie Tring. Margaret and Sidney Go to the Pictures. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Jul -9 Aug</td>
<td>Peter Clemesha. Early Late Modern Auto. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Jul -26 Aug</td>
<td>Carol Rudyard. Traces. Video installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-30 Aug</td>
<td>David Jones. Extremities. Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-17 Sep</td>
<td>Pat Hoffie, Loris Button and Rebecca Cummins. Traditions and Narratives. Installation and performance, part of ARX’87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Oct -1 Nov</td>
<td>Merilyn Fairskye. Conducting Bodies (2). Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14 Nov</td>
<td>The Triptych Show. Praxis Annual Fundraising Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Nov -13 Dec</td>
<td>Fabrications: Recent Contemporary Art from Tasmania. Paintings and sculptures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Undercroft Gallery

3 Feb-3 Mar  The James Watson Collection. Paintings, drawings and graphic works by artists such as Kathleen O’Connor, Bessie Gibson, Sydney Long and Lionel Lindsay


11Mar-10 Apr  Prints from the UWA Art Collection, including woodcuts, linocuts and etchings

21 May-18 Jun  Acquisitions. Works acquired during 1986

21 May-18 Jun  The Australian Landscape. Paintings from the UWA Art Collection

12 Aug-10 Sep  Papunya Aboriginal Art. 51 paintings from the Robert Holmes à Court collection, part of National Aboriginal Week


16 Sep-14 Oct  Jon Tarry. Works on paper

11-22 Dec  Two + Four Young Contemporaries. Drawings, paintings and prints

Fremantle Arts Centre

22 Jan-15 Feb  Shigeo Shiga, ceramics. Judy Prosser, watercolours. Memnuna Vila-Bogdanich, drawings

25 February 1987 Fremantle Prize for Drawing


29 Apr-24 May  Meg Padgham, paintings. Inta Goddard, mixed media works on paper. Bronwyn Goss, Leslie Wright and Belinda Mele, jewellery and table objects

3-28 June  WA Week Invitation Art Exhibition. Narrative Painting in Western Australia. Tom Alberts, Nola Farman, Fred Gilbert, Thomas Hoareau, Priscilla Kelly, Theo Koning, Mary Moore and Miriam Stannage


7 August  Pastels by Greg Baker, Dael Hunter, Eveline Kotai, Louise Lodge, Anne Maughan, Russell Sheridan, Ted Snell and Peter Walker. Ian Nowak, wrought iron. Alun Leach-Jones, drawings and prints

5-30 Aug  Twelfth Fremantle Print Award
30 October  Vic Greenaway, ceramics. Keith Stout and Gordon Wilkins, turned wood. John Oldham, drawings
27 Nov-20 Dec  Elizabeth Ford, paintings. Stuart Earnshaw, raku forms and drawings. Julie Parson mixed media works on paper
24 Dec-31 Jan  Twelve Western Australian watercolourists

Galerie Dusseldorf

16 Jan-1 Feb  Aboriginal Art from Arnhem Land and Central Australia, in conjunction with Aboriginal Arts Australia
6 Feb-1 Mar  Ted Snell. Paintings and drawings. Festival of Perth exhibition
6-29 March  Su Baker. New paintings
6-19 March  John Beard. Recent paintings
10 Apr-17 May  Michael Iwanoff. Orientations. 26 paintings
24 May-14 Jun  Eugenia Doropoulos. Photography
19 Jun-17 Jul  Douglas Chambers. Paintings
10-29 Nov  Kevin Robertson and Megan Salmon. Australia-England-Italy: A Painted Travelogue

Greenhill Galleries

5-22 Jan  Patrick Hockey. Paintings
27 Jan-22 Feb  Brett Whiteley. Paintings, drawings and sculpture
1-19 March  Pro Hart, paintings. David Rose, prints
22 Mar-23 Apr  Tom Gleghorn and Jeffrey Makin, works on paper. Eveline Kotai, pastels and paintings
26 Apr-21 May  Margaret Woodward and Andrew Southall, drawings. Jonathan Snowball, paintings
24 May-18 Jun  Alan Wolf-Tasker and Janet Green, paintings. Pippin Drysdale, Jane Gooch and Georgina Elm, ceramics
21 June        Clifton Pugh, paintings and gouaches. Madeleine Clear, paintings
17 July        Hal Missingham, watercolours. Joyce Scott, ceramics
21 August      Peter Laverty, watercolours and oils. Russell Sheridan, paintings and mixed media
18 September  Len French, enamel paintings. Jules Sher, paintings
16 October     Wendy Stavrianos, paintings. Christine McCarthy, lino prints. Adriane Strampp, Margaret River oil paintings
20 November   Victor Majzner, paintings. Garry Zeck, ceramics and brush paintings. Mike Vanderleur, watercolours

Gallery 52

6-23 Jan       Australian artists. Paintings, works on paper and prints
28 Jan-20 Feb  John Firth-Smith. Paintings 1986
24 Feb-20 Mar  Chris Capper and Ragai Wallis. Paintings
20 March       Mac Betts, John Firth-Smith, Robert Jacks, Marie Hobbs and Sandra Leveson-Meares. Paintings
1 May          Guy Grey-Smith. Paintings, drawings and serigraphs
22 May-12 Jun  90x50 Show. Paintings by David Apsden, Sieglinde Battley, Mac Betts, Robert Birch, Chris Capper, Peter Clarke, Mary Dudin, Robert Jacks, Michael Johnson, Cliff Jones, Robert Juniper and John Firth-Smith. Helen Taylor, charcoal drawings
19 June        John Lewis, paintings and works on paper. Leslie Stonehouse, oil paintings on paper
24 July        John Robinson, paintings and pastels. Robyn Bischoff, mixed media works on paper
15-28 Aug     Work in various media: Peter Clarke, Mac Betts, Chris Capper, Nola Farman, John Firth-Smith, Guy Grey-Smith, Marie Hobbs, Robert Jacks, Sandra Leveson-Meares and Michael Shannon
4 September   Mandy Martin and Amanda Marks, paintings and mixed-media works on paper. Ken Orchard, woodblock prints
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exhibition Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 October</td>
<td>Sam Fullbrook, paintings and drawings. Ken Wadrop, large scale painting and sculpture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-27 Nov</td>
<td>Ivan Bray and Karl Wiebke. Paintings</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Nov-11 Dec</td>
<td>Mac Betts, Chris Capper, Guy Grey-Smith, Sam Fullbrook, Marie Hobbs, Robert Jacks, Mandy Martin, Trevor Richards and Arthur Russell. Paintings</td>
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**The Beach Gallery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exhibition Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>Inaugural Group Show. Edward Horabin, Rick Vermey, Cathy Cinanni, Anna Zanella, Peter Wales, Thomas Kayser, John Awram, Marnie Hutchinson, Kevin Raxworthy, Richard McMahon, Andrew Strachan, Mike Starkie, Derek Tang, Bridget Thornton, Robbie Jefferson, Martin Tabor, Darin Howard, Michelle Over and Trevor Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-28 Jun</td>
<td>Anna Zanella. Snaps and Documentaries. Peter Wales, photographs</td>
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<td>3 Jul-2 Aug</td>
<td>Darin Howard. The Global Celebration of Bad Weather and Bitumen. Biro drawings and large paintings</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-30 Aug</td>
<td>Robert Jefferson and Nic Ryan. Between the Caress and the Axe. Mixed media drawings, constructions and oils on canvas</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-28 Sep</td>
<td>Trevor Black. Blitzed at the Beach. Recent paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-28 Sep</td>
<td>Believing Room, Large Scale Paintings. Tom Alberts, Edward Bear, Trevor Black, Cathy Cinanni, Julie Crockett, Chris Fitzallen, Andrew Hayim, Kevin Raxworthy, Andrew Strachan (with Darin Howard) and Rick Vermey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Sep-4 Oct</td>
<td>Ink excess! Prints by students and staff of Curtin University of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-28 Oct</td>
<td>Michelle Over. Recent Paintings and Sculptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-28 Nov</td>
<td>Upstairs Opening Exhibition. Janine Brody, Gina Cinanni, Rod Glick, Pam Gaunt, Joss Gregson, Wendy Herrington, Nick Horn, Frank Morris, Marilyn Moore and Annette Seeman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-28 Nov</td>
<td>Cathy Cinanni. Scratches from an Alley Cat. Large works and prints</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-30 Dec</td>
<td>Wayne Anthony Howard. Infineart. Paintings</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-30 Dec</td>
<td>Edward Bear and Rick Vermey. Elusive Truths. Installation, paintings, sculptures and sound</td>
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<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Exhibition Details</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Utopia. Hand-dyed batik on silk</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Ramingining. Bark paintings and didgeridoos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Aboriginal Fashion Garment Exhibition. Desert Designs, Tiwi Designs and Marribank</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Prints and paintings by Aboriginal artists in Western Australian prisons</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-31 Aug</td>
<td>Artworks from the East Kimberley area, including work by Rover Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-21 Sep</td>
<td>Harold Thomas. Watercolours of the Kakadu National Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Tiwi People of Bathurst Island. Pottery, paintings and screen-printed material</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Mimi Arts and Crafts. Work by women from Catherine, Northern Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Ernabella Arts and Crafts. Handcrafted batik on silk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 7: ART GALLERIES IN PERTH 1997

PUBLIC GALLERIES

Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Cultural Centre
Cullity Gallery, School of Architecture and Fine Arts, University of Western Australia
Fremantle Arts Centre, 1 Finnerty St, Fremantle
Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia
Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), Perth Cultural Centre

COMMERCIAL GALLERIES

Accent Fine Art Gallery, 23 Railway Rd, Subiaco
Agora Fine Arts Gallery, 31 Napoleon St, Cottesloe
Alpha Studios, Lot 265 Victoria Rd, Wattle Grove
Anno Domini Gallery, 221 Beaufort St, Northbridge
Artist in Residence, 907 Hay St moved to Fraser Avenue, Kings Park
Artplace 52(I) Bayview Terrace, Claremont
A-Shed Gallery, Victoria Quay, Fremantle
Bickley Valley Gallery, 116 Glenisla Rd, Bickley
Captured On Canvas, 8 Norman St, Wembley Downs
Code Red, 34 St Quentin’s Ave, Claremont
Craftwood Artisan Gallery, 57 High St, Fremantle
Dalkeith Fine Art, 89 Waratah Ave, Dalkeith
Darlington Studio, corner Glen and Brook roads, Darlington
Delaney Gallery, 74 Beaufort St, Perth
Desert Designs Japingka Gallery, 47 High St, Fremantle
Gadfly Gallery, 71 Princess Rd, Nedlands
Galerie Dusseldorf, 9 Glyde St, Mosman Park
Gallery 360, 360 Hay St, Subiaco
Gallery East, 3/57 Bayview Terrace, Claremont
Goddard De Fiddes, Upper Plaza, QVI Building, 250 St George’s Terrace, Perth
Gomboc Gallery Sculpture Park, 50 James Rd, Middle Swan
Greenhill Galleries, 37 King Street, Perth
Heron’s Gallery, Corner Stirling Highway and Stirling St, Claremont
Indigenart - The Mossenson Gallery, 115 Hay St, Subiaco
Katsui Studio, 343 Stirling Highway, Claremont
Klopper Pottery, Shop 2, 3-5 Bannister St, Fremantle
Lister Gallery, 68 Mount St, Perth
McKenzies Gallery, 8 Stirling Rd, Claremont
Millennium Gallery, corner Catherine and Hay Streets, Subiaco
Mt Lawley Craft Centre and Art Gallery, 676a Beaufort St, Mt Lawley
New Collectables Gallery, corner George and Duke Streets, East Fremantle
Perth Galleries, 61 Forrest St, Subiaco West Perth
Rafferty’s 762 Beaufort St, Mt Lawley moved to 21 Lincoln St, Highgate
Stafford Studios of Fine Art, 102 Forrest St, Cottesloe
The Gallery of Fine Art, http://www.ausart.asn.an (operated online only)
The International Art Gallery, 355 Stirling Highway, Claremont
Waterwheel Gallery, Corner Waterwheel Rd and Albany Highway, Bedfordale

ARTIST-RUN SPACES

Artshouse Gallery, 53 James St, Perth
Ellis House Gallery and Craft Shop, River-End Milne St, Bayswater
Jacksue Gallery, 486 Murray Street, Perth
Maltings Gallery, 35 Stuart St, Northbridge
Moores Building, 46 Henry St, Fremantle
Spiral Studios, 418 Murray Street, Perth
The Photography Gallery of WA, ground floor of Artshouse, 52-53 James St, Northbridge
Vast Gallery, 86 Guilford Road, Mt Lawley
The Verge Incorporated, 310-312 William St, Northbridge

COMMUNITY GALLERIES

Atwell Gallery, 586 Canning Highway, Alfred Cove
Expressions Maddington Community Gallery, Attfield St, Maddington
Kalla Yeedip Gallery, Midland Enterprise Centre, Great Eastern Highway and Viveash Rd, Midland
Mandurah Art Gallery, Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, Mandurah
Mundaring Arts Centre, 7190 Great Eastern Highway, Mundaring
Rockingham Art Centre Gallery, 2 Civic Boulevard, Rockingham
APPENDIX 8: EXHIBITIONS IN PERTH IN 1997 (SELECTED GALLERIES)

Art Gallery of Western Australia

13 Nov-5 Jan  Recent Acquisitions. Axel Poignant and Karron Bridges, traditional portraiture. Alan Cruickshank, computer-generated images. Stelarc’s suite of photo-lithographs documenting his bodywork performances from the 1980s

26 Oct-5 Jan  Treasures of New Norcia - A Monastery in the Bush. 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Benedictine community of New Norcia and its art collection


24 Dec-13 Apr  Contemporary Australian Women Artists. Recent acquisitions of work by Susan Norrie, Penny Bovell, Miriam Stannage and the late Emily Kame Kngwarreye

10 Jan-14 May  Recent Acquisitions. Craft and Design. From eighteenth-century British ceramics to Australian and international modernist works of the twentieth century

18 Jan-16 Mar  Daughters of the Dreaming - Sisters Together Strong. Traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art. Sally Morgan, Julie Dowling, Sue Wyatt, Sandra Hill, Julie Dixon, Alta Winmar, Gladys Milroy, Norma MacDonald and Gnurga Mia, together with traditional artists from the Balgo Community

13 Feb-6 Apr  Inside the Visible: Alternative Views of 20th Century Art Through Women’s Eyes. Thirty-three women artists from the USA, Europe and South America. Paintings, watercolours, sculpture, photographs, videos and site-specific installations from the 1930s to the 1990s

27 Mar-25 May  Fields and Images 1962-1989. Large scale paintings by Australian and international artists

27 March-  Western Australian Art to 1960. The Colonial Eye: early paintings, scientific and topographic prints, drawings and furniture. Tradition and Modernism: the landscape theme in Western Australian art from 1930 to 1960 together with art, craft and design of the period

3 Apr-18 May  Year 12 Perspectives. Paintings, prints, textiles, garments, sculpture and mixed media work by students of Art and Design in year 12 during 1996

28 April-  Artist Artisan. Works by Ian Burn, Robert MacPherson, Susan Norrie, Carol Rudyard and Ken Wadrop
12 May- Australian and International Art 1900-1970. Paintings, prints, sculpture, furniture, craft and design
12 May- Reconfigurations - New Forms in Contemporary Crafts and Design. Works by Australian and international artists
29 May-6 July Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition 1997
11 Jun-27 Jul Tom Roberts. Over eighty paintings spanning the period 1856 to 1931
11 Jul-24 Aug Summer Beauties, Some Are Not. Works selected by the Voluntary Gallery Guides to celebrate their twentieth anniversary
24 Jul-26 Aug The Language of Glass. Styles of glass from the late eighteenth century to innovative post-1970 developments in studio glass in Europe, America, Japan and Australia
3 Sep-14 Dec The Japan Inspiration: Influence in Craft and Design
13 Sep-23 Nov ‘That Magic Land’: Landscape Traditions in Europe and Australia 1700-1900
16 Aug-22 Sep Immaterial Landscape, works by Ken Unsworth, Mike Parr, Miriam Stannage, Brian Blanchflower and Rosalie Gascoigne
19-21 Sep Art in Bloom
23 Oct-11 Jan The Golden Age of Dutch Art: Seventeenth Century Paintings from the Rijksmuseum and Australian Collections
29 Nov- Landscape Mapping. Australian landscapes from early topographic views to contemporary interpretations in various mediums
6 Dec-8 Feb Narelle Jubelin - Soft Shoulder. Industrially manufactured goods and hand-made objects installed on a special concrete shelf
13 Dec-29 Mar Boom! Exploring the North-West in the 1960s. Eight Western Australian artists inspired by the mining boom in the Pilbara region during the 1960s and 1970s

Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

8 Jan-2 Feb Kim Donaldson (Vic). From the Lecture - A Reminder of Life. Installation
8 Jan-2 Feb Brigitta Priestley (WA). Hand-Made Film - Communal Film - Grafitti Film. Made by the visitors to PICA
8 Jan-2 Feb Trudy Classens (Netherlands). Frame of Reference. Installation
8 Jan-2 Feb Grant Hobson (WA/Vic). Cattle Grid/Sight Unseen. Billboard scale landscape photography: 10 large digital images showing personal views of the land
8 Jan-2 Feb Cathy Blanchflower (WA). Rainroom. Installation creating an artificial environment of rain, direct interpretation of ‘art imitates nature’
12 Feb-9 Mar  Burning the Interface < International Artists’ CD ROM>. The first major survey exhibition of CD-ROM art by Australian and international artists

12 Feb-9 Mar  Technè, locally curated national exhibition of electronic art - from CD ROM to Videotheque. Curated by Rick Mason and Michelle Glaser (WA)

19 Mar-20 Apr  FRESH. Emerging local artists working in the area of installation, time based and electronic media. Stephen Armitstead, Chris Baker, Jennifer Catalano, Sam Collins, Peter Davidson, Sohan Ariel Hayes, Shannon Howie, Heloise Roberts, Abi Temby and multimedia group: S’Dorville, Tamara Clifford, Kate Hocking and Luisa Lim

19 Mar-20 Apr  Frank Morris (WA). Mute. Paintings

19 Mar-20 Apr  Vivian Cooper Smith (WA). Searching for Monsters. Installation

2-25 May  Sound States: Uncertain Destinations, a festival of sonic arts

6 Jun-7 Jul  1997 Hatched: Healthway National Graduate Show & Symposium. The sixth annual national survey of visual arts graduates from around Australia


17 Jul-17 Aug  Paul Saint (NSW). Towards a Cultural Future. Sculptural installation

17 Jul-17 Aug  Marianne Eigenheer (Switzerland). Dream of the Dolphin. Wall paintings

17 Jul-17 Aug  Art Rage - Artworks for Television. Curator: Kim Machan (QLD), touring show

17 Jul-17 Aug  Patrick O’Connor (WA). Matrix of Time and Energy. Installation

3-21 Sep  Margie Medin (VIC). Mobility in an Artificial City. Video installation

3-21 Sep  Derek Kreckler (Aus) and Pushpamala (India). Fire and Life exhibition: An Asialink project. Collaborative installation: objects and video

3-21 Sep  Nicola Kaye (WA). History and Other Great Stories. Projection

3-21 Sep  Richie Kahaupt (WA). A Little man Exhibition. Sculpture

24 Sep-19 Oct  ARTRAGE. The Perth Festival Fringe Society’s visual arts program


30 Oct-23 Nov  Breath of Life: Moments in Transit towards Aboriginal Sovereignty. Photographs by Eleanor Williams and linocuts and poetry by Kevin Gilbert

4-21 Dec The Photography Gallery of WA @ PICA. John Austin, John Toohey, Stephen Smith, Patrick Brown, Matthew Henry, Sharyn Moore, Pannizza Allmark and David Dare Parker

Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery

14 Apr-30 Mar The Way We Were: 1940s-1950s. Paintings, prints and ceramics from the University Art Collection [14 April 1996 to 30 Mar 1997]
3 Nov-26 Jan Ways of Viewing. Carol Rudyard and Margaret Preston
8 Nov-26 Jan Threads. A Selection of landscapes from the Wesfarmers collection 1800s to the present
14 Feb-6 Apr Stories: Works from the Holmes à Court Collection. Eleven Aboriginal Artists.
14 Feb-25 May Rover Thomas in Focus. Paintings from the Holmes à Court Collection
11 Apr-29 Jun Crescendo: Joan Campbell’s Recent Works. Ceramics
18 Apr-1 Jun Expressive Figuration: Jan Senbergs, Kevin Connor and Pam Hallendal
30 May-24 Aug Hans Arkeveld. In Focus. Sculptures
4 Jul-17 Aug Bevan Honey. Four Hands and No Feet. Striking architectural constructions which challenge traditional notions of printmaking
25 Jul-8 Sep Drawn from Life: Life Drawing in Australian Art from the National Gallery of Australia. Figure drawings by 40 artists spanning the period 1880s to 1980s
3-26 Oct Sidney Nolan: The Snake (Peking Mural) and works from the Flower Series
7 Nov-1 Feb Small is Beautiful: Eight Western Australian Sculptors. Aadje Bruce, Fran Cassidy, Michele Elliott, Stuart Elliott, Andrew Frost, Ron Gomboc, Tony Jones and Mary Knott
**Galerie Dusseldorf**

6-30 Apr     Galliano Fardin. Acqua e Terra. Abstract paintings based on the landscape
11 May-4 Jun  Stuart Ringholt. Sculptures. Representation of natural materials in geometric form
20 Jul-3 Aug  Marianne Eigenheer (Switzerland). Works on Paper
10 Aug-7 Sep  Richard Gunning. Paintings, drawings and prints
14 Sep-8 Oct  Kevin Robertson. Interiors: Recent paintings. Portraiture, still life and architectural studies
19 Oct-12 Nov Theo Koning. A Portrait of the Mind. Drawings, paintings and sculpture
22 Nov-17 Dec Galerie Dusseldorf - 21 Years On. 21st Anniversary Invitation Exhibition. New work by fifty Australian artists

**Goddard De Fiddes Contemporary Art**

14 Jan-14 Feb  Geometric Abstraction. Paintings
4-19 Apr       Penny Bovell. “Air 2.” Paintings
25 Apr-10 May  Geoff Drake-Brockman. The Identity Appliance. Paintings and sculptures
16-31 May      Guy Grey-Smith. Early Works 1945-54. Paintings
6-21 Jun       Carey Merten. Black and white paintings
27 Jun-12 Jul  Virginia Ward. I am your Sweet Plaything. Found objects as sculpture
18 Jul-2 Aug   Daniel Argyle. Unit/System. Installation
8-23 Aug       A Further Possibility (New West Coast Abstraction). Third Anniversary exhibition: Cathy Blanchflower, Michelle Sharpe, Carey Merten, Andrew Leslie, Walter Gomes, Emma Langridge, Daniel Argyle, Trevor Richards and Jurek Wybraniec
29 Aug-13 Sep  Gail Hastings. Installation
19 Sep-4 Oct   Jon Tarry. Tracery. Paintings and sculptures
10-25 Oct      Giles Hohnen. Minimalist, colour-field paintings
31 Oct-15 Nov  Susan Flavell. Installation incorporating video, sculpture and drawing
21 Nov-6 Dec   Trevor Vickers. Recent paintings
Gomboc Gallery Sculpture Park

29 Jan  Paintings and sculpture by Western Australian Artists
9 Feb-2 Mar  Ian Hill. Paintings and sculpture
6-27 Apr  Sculpture Survey 1997. Invited artist Cameron Roberts. Indoor and outdoor sculptures by established artists and students from Claremont Campus of Western Australian School of Art and Design, Midland TAFE, Curtin University, UWA and ECU
4-25 May  Ella Fry. Paintings
18 May-29 Jun  Paintings by Arid Zone Artists. Shane Gehlert, Howard Steer, Kym Hart and Geoff Demain from Broken Hill
1-29 June  Robert Juniper. Paintings
6-27 July  Andrew Kay. Sculpture
6-27 July  Bob Colcutt. Paintings
3-31 Aug  Bjorn Dolva. Paintings
7-28 Sep  Brian Yates. Paintings
7-28 Sep  Norma MacDonald. Paintings
7-28 Sep  Stuart Elliott. Ebb: Fragments from the second decade. Sculptures
5-26 Oct  Jenny Anderson. Mixed media
5-26 Oct  Edward Pagram. Drawings and sculpture
2-23 Nov  Lawrence Dolman. Sculpture
2-23 Nov  Val McDonald, Mikaela and Stephen Castledine. Paintings
30 Nov-21 Dec  Fifteenth Anniversary Exhibition. Prominent Western Australian painters and sculptors

Artpace

22 Jan-14 Feb  Olga Cironis. “Intercido 2.” Installation inspired by the history of the Bunbury Art School
19 Feb-9 Mar  Shana James. Paintings and works on paper. Festival of Perth exhibition
19 Mar-12 Apr  Ron Nyisztor. Paintings
16 Apr-10 May  Butcher Cherel Janangoo, Joonany garra mi yoodila: I put it good way. Paintings and works on paper
14 May-4 Jun Concetta Petrillo. Paintings dealing with censorship in art
14 May-4 Jun The Censorship show. Group exhibition and auction
6-29 June John Cullinane. From the Sketch Book. Small oil paintings
6-29 June Group exhibition celebrating five years at Artpace
9 Jul-3 Aug Phillip McNamara. Marvels and other Intents of Play. Paintings and photographic collages
13 Aug-13 Sep Aadje Bruce. Repetition. Installation
10-30 Sep Garry Anderson. Realistic paintings
12 Oct-6 Nov Elspeth Averil. “Drogs.” Watercolours featuring frogs and dogs
12 Nov-6 Dec Indra Geidans. Recent Works: paintings of suburban backyards and domestic themes
10-31 Dec Robin Warren. Paintings
0-31 Dec Kate Thamo. Stories, Lies and Make-believe. Hand-coloured etchings

The Verge Incorporated

7-16 June Gotham on the Verge. New work by members of the Gotham studio collective.
Corrie Birch, Cathy Blanchflower, Caspar Fairhall, Linda Fardoe, Richard Gunning,
Thomas Hoareau, Laura Martinazzo, Anna Meara, Kevin Robertson, Megan Salmon,
Fiona Taylor and Robin Warren
28 Jun-13 Jul Philip Gamblen and Pauline Wilde. Intersection
20 Jul-3 Aug Nick Horn and Chris Fitzallen. Relaxed and Uncomfortable. Installation of
assemblages and small work
20 Nov-8 Dec Geordie Duncan. Four Years at Art School
December Merrick Belyea. Solo show
1997 Andrew Frost. Landscape in Community
1997 Rick Vermey. Dissent window projection. Installation

Jacksue Gallery

14 Feb-2 Mar Choice - Dark. Philip Gamblen, David Steed, Tee Ken Ng, Marcus Canning, Matt Stack, Paul Hunt, Sian Binder. Installations
7-23 Mar Choice - Light. Stephanie Marinovich, Jason Vernaleo, Natasha George, Emma Langridge, Vanessa King and Tom Müller. Installations
2-11 May Justine Dalziel. Hunt and Gather. An exhibition about collection and obsession
Oct-Nov Cynthia Ellis. Pulse. Paintings
12-22 Nov Edith Cowan University. Photo Media Graduate Show
December WA School of Visual Arts at the WA Academy of Performing Arts. Graduation Show by Honours students

Artist in Residence Gallery

1997 Sandra Hill. Triumph of Spirit: An Aboriginal Experience
Jan- Feb Sandra Hill, Norma McDonald and Shane Pickett. Paintings
April-May Sandra Hill, Athol Farmer, Shane Picket and Norma McDonald. Paintings
December Shane Pickett. Paintings and launch of the book The Eagle’s Nest illustrated by Shane Pickett